NATION

Rains return to Mumbai & so does misery

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BUSINESS

Adani targets 10 GW nuclear power capacity by 2035

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SPORTS

Ronaldo roars back with 2 goals as Portugal beats Uzbekistan

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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FIFA to break norms, let Trump present WC trophy

NEW YORK, 24 JUNE

US President Donald Trump will attend the 2026 FIFA World Cup final at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey on July 19 and will jointly present the championship trophy with FIFA President Gianni Infantino. The move marks a departure from standard FIFA protocol, under which the FIFA president alone presents the trophy to the winning captain. Trump's role follows controversy at the FIFA Club World Cup final, where he remained on the podium alongside Chelsea players during celebrations, drawing surprise from players and fans. Infantino recently awarded Trump the FIFA Peace Prize. The two have maintained close ties, with the FIFA chief having visited Trump at the Oval Office on multiple occasions. *—PTI*

K'taka to roll out G RAM G despite financial burden

BENGALURU, 24 JUNE

Karnataka Minister Eshwar Khandre on Wednesday said the new rural employment guarantee scheme, VB G RAM G, which replaces MGNREGA, will be implemented from 1 July, despite the additional financial burden on the state government.

The Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister said the decision was being taken in the interest of rural residents, women, marginalised communities and other vulnerable sections of society.

"Under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme introduced by the UPA government, the Centre previously bore wages in a 90:10 ratio, with states contributing only 10 per cent," Khandre said. "Under the new arrangement, expenses must be shared in a 60:40 ratio, significantly increasing the burden on state governments,"

he added.

Speaking to reporters after chairing a meeting with senior officials here, he said, "From 2006 to 2026, the Centre spent about Rs 56,492 crore under MGNREGA in Karnataka, while the state contributed only Rs 4,821 crore, generating around 182 crore person-days of employment."

"Under the new system, the state alone will have to bear Rs 3,806 crore in a single year, which is a major financial burden," he added.

Khandre said the Centre should have consulted the states and taken them into confidence before introducing the Viksit Bharat–Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) in Parliament.

The matter is being challenged in the Supreme Court, and the state is also demanding that the Centre gradually increase its share to at least 80:20 to support the states, he said. *—PTI*

B'luru footpaths to go vendor-free

People must remove their shops from 2,000km of footpaths or face demolition

BENGALURU, 24 JUNE

Shop owners who have encroached upon footpaths along 2,000km of roads have been given until 1 July to voluntarily remove their structures from Bengaluru's footpaths or face action, Bengaluru Development Minister **Krishna Byre Gowda** said on Wednesday.

He was announcing the a City-wide 'Safe Footpath Campaign' to clear footpaths along 2,000km of "priority roads" in Bengaluru. If vendors do not voluntarily move, they civic authorities will take demolition drives and impose hefty penalties, Gowda said.

"Walking on footpaths is a fundamental right," Gowda told reporters after a review meeting with senior civic officials.

"The Supreme Court has clearly stated that footpaths are for pedestrians, not vehicles. Therefore, any vehicle parked on a footpath will be towed away," he said.

The campaign will focus on arterial and sub-arterial roads identified as priority corridors, where authorities aim to remove obstacles to pedestrian movement and improve footpath conditions.

Gowda said the City has around 13,000 to 14,000 km of roads, but the immediate focus would be on ensuring safe pedestrian access along 2,000 km of major roads.

"I am not claiming that we will cover all 14,000 kilometres of roads," he clarified.

In a message to the City's thousands of traders, he said: "Footpaths are not your property. They belong to Bengaluru's 15 million residents. Footpaths are not even government property. They belong to the people."

Pushcart vendors will not be allowed to operate on footpaths and priority roads, including arterial and sub-arterial corridors, though they may continue their business in other permitted areas. To complement enforcement measures, the government has earmarked Rs 70 crore for repairs and restoration of existing footpaths across the City. Additionally, he said that notice stickers will be placed on abandoned vehicles from 1 July, and if they are not claimed, towing will begin from 10 July. This, he said, was in line with the Supreme Court directions on walkable footpaths. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 2

NO MORE DUMPING TAR, FIX POTHOLES PROPERLY: KBG

BENGALURU, 24 JUNE

Bengaluru Development Minister Krishna Byre Gowda told officials during a meeting that "roads must be cut in a box shape, filled with jelly aggregate, surfaced with tar, and finished level with the road surface. Simply pouring tar into potholes is unacceptable".

In road construction and pavement maintenance, "box cutting" a pothole refers to sawing or chiselling out a neat, straight-edged square or rectangular section around the damaged asphalt before filling it.

He said that the government had allocated Rs 77 crore on pothole-filling works, with priority given to traffic junctions, signals, and major intersections. The minister suggested that buses and other vehicles should not be allowed to stop within 75 metres of traffic signals, and called for the removal of unnecessary speed breakers near signalised junctions to improve traffic flow. *—PTI*

NOEL TATA TO RETIRE AS TRENT CHAIRMAN

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

Noel Tata has said Trent's 74th AGM will be his last as Chairman, concluding a historic tenure where he built the Tata retail firm from a single storefront in Bengaluru into a leading Indian fashion and lifestyle giant.

Noel Tata, who is also Chairman of Tata Trusts, the largest shareholder of Tata Sons, will turn 70 in November this year.

The Companies Act 2013 mandates that any Managing Director or Whole-Time Director cannot be appointed or continue employment if they are 70 years of age or older, with certain exceptions.

Thanking shareholders, employees and partners for their support over the years, Tata said the company has evolved into a strong and resilient retail platform with a clear focus on creating long-term value.

Tata said India continues to offer significant opportunities for organised retail, driven by rising disposable incomes, urbanisation and growing preference for branded products. Looking ahead, he expressed confidence in long-term growth prospects. *—PTI*

Ethanol fuel safe, won't affect insurance: Govt

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

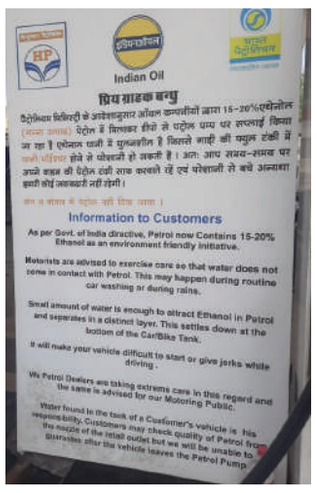
India's ethanol blending programme remains safe, consumer-friendly, and economically beneficial, the government said, dismissing concerns that the use of E20 fuel could affect the validity of vehicle insurance policies.

The oil ministry in a statement said claims linking E20 fuel use to insurance invalidation had been clarified with relevant stakeholders and were found to be incorrect.

"Ethanol blending is a globally accepted practice and is successfully implemented in several countries, including the United States, Brazil, and Japan," it said.

The government said the ethanol blending programme has helped India save more than Rs 1.4 lakh crore in foreign exchange by reducing crude oil imports. It added that the programme has created sustained demand for agricultural feedstocks used in ethanol production, supporting farmers' incomes and strengthening rural economy.

"Ethanol blending plays an important role in enhancing India's energy security, reducing carbon emissions and advancing the country's transition towards cleaner mobility," the statement said. *—PTI*


Indian Oil
प्रिय ग्राहक बन्धु
Information to Customers
As per Govt. of India directive, Petrol now Contains 15-20% Ethanol as an environment friendly initiative.
Motorists are advised to exercise care so that water does not come in contact with Petrol. This may happen during routine car washing or during rains.
Small amount of water is enough to attract Ethanol in Petrol and separates in a distinct layer. This settles down at the bottom of the Car/Bike Tank.
It will make your vehicle difficult to start or give jerks while driving.
We Petrol Dealers are taking extreme care in this regard and the same is advised for our Motoring Public.
Water found in the tank of a Customer's vehicle is his responsibility. Customers may check quality of Petrol from the nozzle of the retail outlet but we will be unable to entertain after the vehicle leaves the Petrol Pump.

Petrol pumps across India have put up notices advising drivers to prevent water from entering their fuel tanks to avoid severe engine issue amid E20 use *—SCREENGRAB*

US, India end trade talks with no clarity over deal

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

US and Indian officials concluded two days of trade talks on Wednesday without clarifying whether an interim bilateral trade agreement would be finalised before a key July 24 tariff deadline, despite reporting progress on negotiations.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer reviewed discussions on the first phase of the proposed bilateral trade agreement (BTA), covering market access, digital trade,

supply chain resilience, non-tariff barriers and cooperation in strategic sectors.

Commerce Ministry said both sides made "substantial" progress and discussed pathways to conclude an interim agreement, while reaffirming their commitment to a balanced and commercially meaningful deal. However, neither side indicated whether outstanding issues had been resolved. The talks come ahead of the expiry of a temporary 10 per cent US tariff regime on 24 July, adding urgency to efforts to secure an interim arrangement. Greer said India and the US will collaborate on artificial intelligence. India is seeking preferential tariff treatment after changes in US trade policy reduced the advantage it expected over competitors such as Vietnam and other ASEAN economies. *—PTI*

India-China start trade via Lipulekh Pass

PITHORAGARH, 24 JUNE

The first batch of 26 Indian traders is expected to enter the Chinese territory of Tibet through the Lipulekh pass on 26 June, marking the resumption of border trade after a six-year hiatus. This comes as Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has said that China is ready to work with India to properly handle sensitive issues, during his meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He is in New Delhi to attend the BRICS NSAs' conference. As the members of the Global South, China and India should play an exemplary role in promoting solidarity, Wang said. India and China have attempted to rebuild their relationship after it witnessed a major downturn following the deadly Galwan Valley clashes in 2020. *—PTI*

Ali Khamenei's funeral: PM invited

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian is learnt to have invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the burial ceremonies for the late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, diplomatic sources said on Wednesday.

The funeral ceremonies will be held from July 5 to 9.

There is no confirmation from Delhi on the invitation.

INDIA ISSUES ADVISORY

Meanwhile, India on Wednesday advised its people to continue avoiding all non-essential travel to Iran until further notice.

The embassy also shared its emergency contact details, including mobile numbers (+989128109115, +989128109109, +989128109102 and +989932179359) and email address cons.tehran@mea.gov.in. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 6

BJP accuses Kharges of land grab across K'taka

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

The BJP on Wednesday alleged that Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge and his son Karnataka Home Minister Priyank Kharge have used their "power and influence" to grab several acres of land in the State.

The allegations by BJP spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari come after the Congress had accused Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav of a massive land grab in his state.

Speaking at a press conference, Bhandari alleged that alleged that the Kharge's Siddhartha Vihara Trust received five acres of land in Bengaluru from the Congress government, valued at about Rs 100 crore, for aerospace and defence research despite the Trust having no prior experience. He also claimed that 19 acres allotted to the trust in Kalaburagi on a 30-year lease was later converted into a permanent lease to make a "permanent property" of Kharge's family.

The BJP spokesperson also alleged that the Siddharth Vihara Trust, in which Kharge, his wife and son are members, grabbed 7.18 acres of land in Gulbarga city by creating a fictitious seller, Kasturi Bai, "Nobody knows who Kasturi Bai is". *—PTI*

>>>More on Pages 2, 3

MAN WITH ALLEGED PAK TERROR LINKS HELD IN DAVANGERE

DAVANGERE, 24 JUNE

A 20-year-old man suspected of having links with a Pakistan-based terror organisation was arrested in Karnataka's Davangere district, police said on Wednesday.

The accused, Suhail, is a native of Uttar Pradesh and had arrived in Harihar taluk around 15 days ago to work as a painter at a private factory.

Davangere Superintendent of Police Shekhar H Tekkannavar said the suspect was detained on Tuesday based on credible information regarding suspicious activities. During questioning, police found that Suhail was allegedly in contact with several Pakistan-based individuals through WhatsApp groups and social media. Suspected terror-related material was also recovered from his WhatsApp account, police said. . *—PTI*

ED raids Satish Jarkiholi's brother-in-law in Belagavi

BELAGAVI, 24 JUNE

Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday conducted searches at six locations linked to Y Manjunath, Additional Commissioner in the Karnataka Excise Department, as part of a money laundering probe. He is also the brother-in-law of PWD Minister Satish Jarkiholi,

The raids covered Manjunath's residence in Hanuman Nagar, Belagavi, and other premises in Mysuru, Bengaluru and Hassan. ED scrutinised documents, bank records and details of assets during the searches. Premises linked to Manjunath's associates were also searched, including a friend's house in Mysuru, an apartment in Bengaluru, a close associate's residence in Arsikere and in Belagavi district's Athani taluk. *—Salar News*

AMID RAIN CHAOS

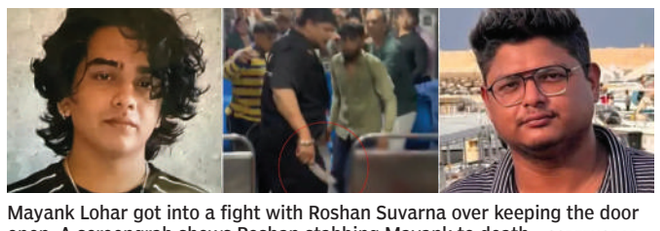
Man killed on Mumbai train over closing doors

MUMBAI, 24 JUNE

A 22-year-old man was stabbed to death allegedly by a co-passenger inside a first-class compartment of a Mumbai local train during an argument over whether the doors should be kept open amid rains, officials said on Wednesday.

The accused, Roshan Suvarna, was arrested from Kurla area of Mumbai.

Victim Mayank Lohar was fatally assaulted on Tuesday between Andheri and Borivali railway stations in the western suburbs, they said.



Mayank Lohar got into a fight with Roshan Suvarna over keeping the door open. A screengrab shows Roshan stabbing Mayank to death *—SCREENGRAB*

Officials said Lohar and another commuter got into an altercation as the train, a Churchgate-Nallasopara fast local, pulled into the Andheri station at 10.42pm. One of them wanted the doors to be kept open, while the other objected, citing the rains. During the argument, the accused pulled out a sharp weapon from his possession and allegedly stabbed Lohar in the abdomen, they said. While Lohar suffered grievous injuries, the accused jumped out of the train at Borivali station before it came to a halt and ran away. Lohar was rushed to a nearby medical facility. He was then taken to a civic-run hospital, where doctors declared him dead. *—PTI*

Show white paper on 'Acche Din': Priyank to BJP

BENGALURU, 24 JUNE

Home Minister Priyank Kharge on Wednesday hit back at BJP MP Tejasvi Surya's demand for a white paper on Bengaluru's infrastructure spending, saying the BJP should first seek an account of the Centre's flagship promises.

"Everybody knows Karnataka's economic situation. He can ask the Modi government. (Union Finance Minister) Nirmala Sitharaman is from Karnataka," Priyank told reporters. He challenged the Centre to release White Papers on "Acche Din", Viksit Bharat, Amrit Kaal, Skill India, Digital India and Make in India. "Let him give a White Paper on the two crore jobs promised, investments coming into the country, drying foreign direct investment, and the rupee versus dollar," he said. *—ANI*

—X @BJP4KARNATAKA

BJP alleges Priyank drives without seatbelt

BENGALURU, 24 JUNE

The Karnataka BJP on Wednesday targeted Home Minister Priyank Kharge, alleging that his official vehicle had violated traffic rules, including overspeeding and not wearing seatbelts. The attack came after Kharge urged motorists on X to drive responsibly and clear pending traffic challans under a 50 per cent discount scheme available from 21 June to 10 July. Sharing screenshots (pic) of four alleged violations linked to vehicle KA42 GA 0099, the BJP claimed the pending fines totalled Rs 2,500. The party said it agreed with Kharge's message on road safety but questioned whether traffic rules applied to him. It also urged him to use the concession and clear the challans promptly at the earliest opportunity available to him. *—PTI*

Govt mulls Rs 2.70 cr/acre compensation for Devanahalli

BENGALURU, 24 JUNE

The Land Price Determination Advisory Committee of the Karnataka government on Wednesday recommended a compensation of Rs 2.70 crore per acre to the KIADB for 120 acres of land in Devanahalli near Bengaluru, where landowners have voluntarily agreed to part with their land for industrial development.

The decision was taken at a joint meeting of officials and landowners held at Aravinda Bhavan in Bengaluru on Wednesday, which was presided over by Karnataka Industrial Areas Development Board Special Deputy Commissioner AN Raghunandan, an official statement said.

Raghunandan said the recommendation would now be placed before the KIADB Board for approval.

He added that landowners who do not wish to receive monetary compensation would have the option of obtaining 10,781 square feet of developed land in the industrial area for every acre of agricultural land acquired.

He noted that the farmers had voluntarily consented to the acquisition of their land and that a final notification under the provisions of the KIADB Act had been issued on the 16th of this month and published in the official gazette.

He further stated that the compensation recommended is the highest ever offered in the Devanahalli region and reflects the government's commitment to ensuring fair compensation for the affected farmers. *—PTI*

Declare North Karnataka drought hit, farmers urge

Sowing hit as 43% rainfall deficit makes crops dry in heat

YOHAN P HONNADDI
BENGALURU, 24 JUNE

Agricultural activities across Karnataka have slowed considerably due to the delayed and deficient southwest monsoon and the impact of the El Nino conditions.

Farmers in districts such as Davanagere, Kalaburagi, Belagavi, Haveri, Chitradurga, Vijayapura, and Bagalkote are facing severe distress as sown crops have dried up due to a lack of rainfall.

Ninganna Karadi Yakshinti, a farmer in Yadgir district told Salar News that the "lack of rainfall has left soil without moisture, stalling sowing across the region. In Yadgir district alone, nearly 70 per cent of sowing operations have halted. Farmers who sowed cotton after light showers now fear seed failure due to the dry spell."

Although a few parts of Central Karnataka and the Old Mysuru region have received scattered showers, conditions remain unsuitable for sowing. Many farmers, trusting the early pre-monsoon showers, sowed crops such as maize. However, the absence of sustained rainfall has caused crops to dry up, resulting in significant losses.

Meanwhile, in Shidenur village of Haveri district, a distressed farmer destroyed his own 11-acre fodder maize crop using a tractor after repeated crop failure due to inadequate rainfall.

Due to the impact of El Nino, the country has recorded a monsoon deficit of around 43 per cent, significantly affecting sowing operations. Except for the Malnad and coastal regions, most districts in Karnataka have recorded rainfall deficits during the southwest monsoon spell. Major reservoirs such as KRS, Kabini, and Hemavathi are also drying up, with sowing of ragi, paddy, pulses, and millets hit.

The district has reportedly recorded a 57 per cent rainfall deficit. Newly germinated crops have begun drying up under intense heat, as farmers are calling for the district to be declared drought hit.

Joint Director of the Agriculture Department Mallikarjun told Salar News that in Haveri, 74 per cent of the sowing targets had been already been completed, but noted that "out of this, 2.35 lakh hectares are rain-fed lands (and) there is a rainfall deficit."

Similarly, in Kalaburagi, farmers have taken to the streets demanding that the district be declared drought-affected immediately.

Yakshinti added that the "rising petrol and diesel prices have increased cultivation costs. Since crops are drying up immediately after sowing, insurance benefits are not available, leaving farmers without support despite heavy financial losses."

FERTILISER SHORTAGE

Farmers also allege that there is a fertiliser shortage, and that the Diammonium Phosphate (DAP) and urea are being sold at a highly inflated rates – Rs 1,800 per bag at Rs 400-Rs 500 per bag respectively. *—Salar News*

The lack of rain in Yadgir means that around 70 per cent of the sowing operations have been halted *—SALAR*

'Drinking water crisis in

RD&PR Minister Eshwar Khandre said that groundwater levels had declined significantly and 826 villages were currently facing drinking water shortages, but assured that there was no shortage of funds.

2 debt-ridden tobacco farmers die by suicide in Mysuru

MYSURU, 24 JUNE

Two debt ridden farmers died by suicide over crop loss as they were unable to clear mounting debt in Mysuru district on Wednesday.

In the first case, a 40-year-old farmer, Praveen died by suicide by hanging himself from a neem tree at his agricultural field at Bettahalli village in Saligrama taluk. Saligrama police said that Praveen fell into depression after the tobacco price crash recently. He had taken out crop loans from private banks in addition to a hand loan of Rs 13 lakh. However, unable to clear the mounting dept and amid the increasing pressure from the money lenders, he took the extreme step, according to a complaint lodged by the deceased's brother Pradeep.

In another case, 51-year-old Swamygowda died by suicide after hanging himself at his residence at Kottavallikoppallu in Periyapatna taluk. He too was a tobacco farmer and had taken loans totalling Rs 20 lakh, including Rs 5 lakh from local Grameena Bank. But the crop loss and price crash likely led him to the extreme step, police said. *—Salar News*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.

FLAGS RS 100CR FRAUD

'19K Gruha Lakshmi beneficiaries had same bank account'

BENGALURU, 24 JUNE

Leader of Opposition in the Assembly R Ashoka alleged that over Rs 100 crore disbursed under the Congress government's flagship Gruha Lakshmi scheme had been given to tens of thousands of beneficiaries with common bank addresses, or in transactions where the bank address was not disclosed. Under the scheme, the government provides Rs 2,000 in monthly assistance to the woman head of every family.

In a post on X on Wednesday, Ashoka cited a Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report, and alleged that 19,020 beneficiaries were linked to common bank account numbers, through which Rs 60.69 crore was disbursed across more than 3.03 lakh transactions.

Another Rs 46.52 crore was reportedly disbursed through 23,262 transactions in which bank account numbers were completely missing from the database, he alleged.

"No records, no data, yet tens of crores are flying out of the exchequer. How can money be transferred to non-existent or unrecorded bank accounts without high-level government connivance?" he asked.

More than 10.06 lakh beneficiary records showed multiple and frequent changes in bank account details, he claimed, adding that this was nothing but a "calculated cover-up and a playground for middlemen."

- Ashoka cited a CAG report, and alleged that 19,020 beneficiaries were linked to common bank account numbers, through which Rs 60.69 crore was disbursed in 3.03 lakh transactions

INSTITUTIONALISED CORRUPTION

Ashoka added that these alleged irregularities were not mismanagement, but "institutionalised corruption".

"Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi, come down to Karnataka and look at your so-called guarantee model," Ashoka alleged. "The truth is officially out. Your flagship guarantee scheme isn't empowering poor women; it has become a systematic mechanism for institutionalised corruption. This isn't welfare; it is organised loot and legalised plunder of honest taxpayers' hard-earned money to fund the Congress party's high command." *—PTI*

Kharge's land grab inspired by Vadra-Gandhi family: BJP

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

BJP spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari at a press conference on Wednesday alleged that Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge and his son Karnataka Home Minister Priyank Kharge's modus operandi for their "land grab" was "inspired by Robert Vadra and Rahul Gandhi family".

Asking why Chief Minister DK Shivakumar wasn't taking action against them, Bhandari alleged that the Congress government in Karnataka also gave 8,125 sq mts of land to Kharge in 2010 when Siddaramaiah was the chief minister.

"Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) was pressured to give this land to Kharge. As the BDA didn't agree, he was transferred and the land was eventually given to him," the BJP spokesperson said.

Bhandari said that the matter is already pending with an MP-MLA court in Karnataka.

"We are presenting hard evidence. If Mallikarjun Kharge does not clarify, it will be considered an admission of guilt," the BJP spokesperson added.

Bhandari also claimed that the Siddhartha Vihara Trust benefited from the allotment of land by the Karnataka Industrial Area Development Board (KIADB) in 2024, during the tenure of the Congress party leading the State. He claimed that a five-acre plot meant for Research and Development in Aerospace and Defence was given to the Kharge-owned private Siddhartha Vihara Trust instead of industrial or aerospace trust.

"Rahul and the entire Gandhi-Vadra family, including Robert Vadra, are facing similar allegations and cases of land grabbing. Mallikarjun, through the Siddhartha Vihar Trust, adopted the same method as the Gandhi-Vadra family," he said.

'I HAVE DOCUS, WHAT ABOUT RSS?'

Priyank, however hit back.

In a statement on X, he refuted the allegations, stating that his documents are publicly available. "Now tell us, when will your political masters in the RSS show theirs?" *—PTI*

MLAs, seers must stop lobbying in Cabinet: Cong High Command

BENGALURU, 24 JUNE

Congress High Command told MLAs, seers, and community leaders to stop lobbying for ministerial posts in the DK Shivakumar-led Cabinet.

Several community representatives, religious mutts, seers, and followers have been publicly pressing for Cabinet berths for their respective MLAs. Multiple delegations have also met senior leaders in Bengaluru and Delhi.

However, senior party sources said the High Command has conveyed to the MLAs and their supporters not to mount pressure through public protests, mutts, or community groups. They were asked to maintain discipline, as it can harm the party's image and create factionalism.

"The party is aware of the aspirations of all legislators. But decisions will be based on regional balance, social representation, and performance, ," a functionary said. *—ANI*

Purple Line resumes after 11 hours due to technical snag

BENGALURU, 24 JUNE

BMRCL on Wednesday said that the technical issue at Cubbon Park Metro in Bengaluru the day earlier has been rectified and normal Purple Line services have resumed.

The disruption on Tuesday at 6.32pm during peak hours had left thousands of daily commuters stranded.

It was one of the most severe to affect Bengaluru's Metro recently.

The disruption also led to massive traffic congestion on City roads.

It created a sense of panic as people were forced to look for alternative modes of transport, with social media users claiming that ride-hailing apps declined bookings or took unusually long to process them, while some autorickshaw drivers allegedly charged exorbitant fares. Security was also tightened at Metro stations.However, Namma Metro's Purple line, which runs from Whitefield (Kadugodi) to Challaghatta, resumed as per the regular timetable from 5am on Wednesday.

Commuters in Purple Line stations were left scrambling in Bengaluru after services were disrupted on Tuesday *-X/@PCMOHANMP*

BMRCL requested passengers to make note of the restoration and continue to utilise the safe, reliable and efficient services of Namma Metro.

'THIRD WORLD GOVERNANCE'

BJP MP Tejasvi Surya claimed the breakdown showed Bengaluru's "first-world tech. Third-world governance".

"Metro disruptions have become alarmingly frequent. Every time the Metro fails, the City descends into chaos. Cabs and autos disappear. Citizens are stranded." *—PTI*

KOLAR COPS ARREST ABSCONDING MAN AFTER 28 YEARS

KOLAR, 24 JUNE

Kolar police arrested a man who had been absconding for nearly 28 years in connection to an attempted murder case from 1998.

The accused, Manjunath (pic), a native of Hoskote, was 18 when he allegedly attacked three people in Kolar before fleeing. Police said the incident occured after he was reportedly mocked for failing his SSLC exams while living with a relative.The case remained unresolved for years. The breakthrough came after Kolar SP Kannika Sikriwal reviewed the case and ordered a fresh probe.

PSI Sangappa Meti and a police team gathered fresh intelligence and found that Manjunath had returned from Goa and was working as a painter. He was tracked to Hoskote, where he had reportedly gone to collect wages, and was arrested.

He was produced before a court and remanded to judicial custody. *—Salar News*

WITH A BLACK MAGIC TWIST

4 held for killing Tumakuru man for insurance money

TUMAKURU, 24 JUNE

A man's death, initially suspected to be an accident after his decomposed body was found on a two-wheeler on a roadside in Tumakuru on 20 June, has now been confirmed as a murder allegedly staged to claim insurance money, police said on Wednesday.

Officials further added that preliminary investigation revealed that the deceased was a practitioner of black magic, which his estranged wife had alleged neighbours were troubled by.

The case came to light after the body of Ramesh, a resident of Andhra Pradesh, was found decomposing on a roadside.

Tumakuru Superintendent of Police Ashok K Venkat *—ANI*

"Upon closer examination, the body bore bruises and abrasions.... a post-mortem examination... revealed that the injuries were caused by a heavy object and that the throat had been strangled," Tumakuru Superintendent of Police (SP) Ashok K Venkat said.

Police said the accused in the case are the deceased's elder brother, Hanumantha Raju, along with his associates Lakshmikant, Naveen Kumar and MD Jilani.

"The motive behind the incident was that the accused had bought a life insurance policy of Rs 15 lakh in his brother's name two years ago... In case of an accident, the amount would have doubled, i.e., Rs 30 lakh," the SP added.

"The four accused have been produced before a magistrate, and the car used in the crime has been seized," SP Venkat said. Further investigations are on, he clarified. *—ANI*

WOMAN HELD IN PUDUCHERRY FOR KILLING PARENTS, SISTER IN BENGALURU

The victims are her parents Somasundar and Muthulaxmi, and younger sister Supriya *–x*

BENGALURU, 24 JUNE

A woman who had been absconding after allegedly killing her parents and younger sister here has been arrested in Puducherry, police said on Wednesday.

The accused, Shwetha, 25, allegedly carried out the murders in with her boyfriend, Kenneth, who remains absconding. Investigators suspect that her parents may have opposed the relationship, .

The incident occurred on Monday night at an apartment in Seegehalli, under KR Puram Police Station. Somasundar, 52, wife Muthulaxmi, 48, and daughter Supriya, 19, were found stabbed to death, officials said. Investigators suspect an argument led to the three being stabbed.

An interrogation of the accused is expected to provide a timeline and motive, said police. *—PTI*

No public sector will be privatised: Keralam CM

T'PURAM, 24 JUNE

Kerala Chief Minister VD Satheesan on Wednesday rejected allegations that the state government is planning to privatise public sector enterprises or the mineral sands sector, saying there was "not a single proposal" to that effect in the Budget. Rejecting allegations of a policy reversal, he said reports that the government is moving towards complete privatisation of mineral sands were "simply not true" and reiterated that the state's position on the issue remained unchanged. Satheesan said discussions and claims circulating on social media and in the media had no basis in the Budget document. Instead, the government's focus was to make public sector undertakings financially stronger and self-sustaining. —*PTI*

Jaishankar meets S Korea FM to advance ties

SEOUL, 24 JUNE

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday held talks with his South Korean counterpart Cho Hyun. The talks, part of Jaishankar's two-day visit to South Korea, focused on bilateral cooperation amid rapidly changing global situations. After the meeting, Jaishankar, in a social media post, said: "We reviewed our cooperation across political, shipbuilding, trade, investments, defence, technology, clean energy, culture and P2P (people-to-people) domains." Jaishankar also said the two of them discussed opportunities in startups, fintech and multilateral forums, exchanging views on developments in their respective regions and around the world. Jaishankar noted that recent meetings between PM Modi and South Korean President Lee Jae Myung have provided a roadmap for advancing bilateral ties. —*PTI*

BIHAR ENCOUNTER: PK THREATENS CM GHERAO, SEEKS PROBE

PATNA, 24 JUNE

Jan Suraaj Party founder Prashant Kishor on Wednesday demanded that the judicial inquiry into the death of a man in the recent police encounter in Bihar's Bhojpur district be conducted by a sitting judge.

The Samrat Choudhary government in Bihar, which has been facing the charge that it was a "fake encounter," has ordered a judicial inquiry to be conducted by a retired high court judge.

Kishor said the role played by "top officials sitting in Patna" must also be probed and warned of "a gherao of the Chief Minister's residence" if the demands were not met in 15 days.

The deceased's kin had met Kishor and sought his help days after the man had been shot dead on 17 June. They debunked the claim of the police that he was "mentally unstable" and that the youngster had become a social and political activist.

The ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in Bihar has accused the opposition of trying to foment trouble. Senior minister Shrawon Kumar claimed that the opposition was "trying to score political points." —*PTI*

Cong, BJP spar over MP CM's Ujjain land 'scam' row

Cong says his landownership rose from 253 to 335 acres since 2021

BHOPAL, 24 JUNE

Madhya Pradesh Congress President Jitu Patwari alleged that the BJP government had become synonymous with corruption and questioned the land holdings linked to the Chief Minister Mohan Yadav –*PTI*

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has come under Opposition fire over allegations that his family acquired large tracts of land in and around Ujjain after he assumed office. The Congress has termed the matter a "land scam", demanded his resignation and sought a probe by a sitting Supreme Court judge, while the BJP has dismissed the charges as baseless.

Citing an investigation by The Indian Express, Congress state president Jitu Patwari alleged that Yadav's family and associated real estate firms purchased at least 137 plots covering around 168 acres, valued at about Rs 45 crore, since he became chief minister in December 2023.

The report claimed the family's land holdings in the region have expanded to around 335 acres from 253 acres since 2021. Many of the parcels are reportedly located near proposed highways, road projects and areas linked to infrastructure development ahead of the Simhastha Kumbh in 2028.

Opposition leaders alleged that several purchases were made before key infrastructure announcements and land-use changes became public, leading to sharp appreciation in land values. According to the report, more than 111 acres are situated close to newly approved road and highway projects. In nearby areas, land prices have reportedly risen between 11 and 35 times following infrastructure announcements and agricultural-to-residential conversions.

Patwari described the controversy as the "plunder of Mahakal's land" and questioned how the family's holdings had allegedly increased from about 100 acres to 335 acres after Yadav took office. He said the allegations had hurt the state's reputation and warranted an independent judicial inquiry.

The BJP hit back, with state president Hemant Khandelwal accusing Congress of targeting an OBC chief minister. He said land declared by Yadav, his wife Seema Yadav and son Vaibhav Yadav in official records had remained unchanged since before he became chief minister. He also said a 10-acre plot purchased by Yadav's daughter-in-law lies outside the master plan area and noted that Yadav resigned as a director of Siddhivinayak Company in 2017. —*PTI*

VIRAL VIDEO ROW

AAP flays BJP after cop nabs 2 over 'fake' Mann video

CHANDIGARH, 24 JUNE

A political row intensified on Wednesday after Haryana Police arrested two men over the alleged procurement of a fabricated forensic report linked to a viral video controversy involving Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann.

Punjab AAP leader Baltej Pannu dismissed the development, alleging the BJP was misusing its control over Haryana Police. He maintained that the person seen in the purported video was not Mann and accused the BJP, Congress and Shiromani Akali Dal of using misinformation and fake videos to tarnish the Punjab government's image ahead of the 2027 Assembly elections.

Pannu claimed the opposition was rattled by the Mann government's development initiatives and welfare schemes, including the 'Maavan-Dheeyan Satkar Yojna', under which women will receive monthly financial assistance from July 1.

Meanwhile, BJP leader Manjinder Singh Sirsa accused Mann and the AAP of orchestrating a conspiracy to obtain a fake forensic report to counter findings of the Akal Takht, which earlier this month declared Mann "guru dokhi" and "Khalsa panth virodhi" over the video.

Sirsa alleged that Punjab Police officers and a private forensic laboratory colluded to declare the video fake. He claimed inquiries pointed to the involvement of senior police officers and alleged that Rs 10 lakh was paid to manipulate the report. The BJP leader also accused AAP of attempting to undermine the authority of the Akal Takht and demanded action against Mann and officials allegedly involved.

According to the FIR registered in Gurugram, the complainant alleged he was pressured to obtain forensic reports concluding that the video was AI-generated and did not feature the Punjab chief minister. AAP has rejected the allegations and accused opposition parties of conspiring to defame Mann. —*PTI*

Sena (UBT) seeks copy of rebels' demands from Birla

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

The embattled Uddhav Thackeray faction of Shiv Sena (UBT) on Wednesday urged Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to share the demands submitted to him by the six rebel Members of Parliament (MPs) of the party who have now joined the Eknath Shinde-led party.

After meeting Birla, Shiv Sena (UBT) leaders Sanjay Raut, Anil Desai and Arvind Sawant (**in pic**) told reporters that they requested the Speaker to "uphold the provisions of the Constitution" and sought a copy of the demands submitted by the rebels.

"We asked him if he had received any appeal from the rebels..." Sawant said, adding that the Speaker told them they had not received anything in writing from the rebel MPs.

He added that the Speaker would update them after checking details with his office if the rebel MPs had submitted anything in writing.

Of the nine Shiv Sena (UBT) Lok Sabha MPs, six crossed over to the Shiv Sena led by Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Shinde, who was the principal architect of the split in the undivided Shiv Sena in 2022 that brought down the MVA government. —*PTI*

AMID PROTEST

Dipke to appear before MeitY over CJP's account suspension

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) founder Abhijeet Dipke on Wednesday said he would appear before a Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) review committee regarding the withholding of the group's X account.

Dipke announced the move while continuing a sit-in at Jantar Mantar, which entered its fifth day, demanding the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over alleged exam irregularities and the NEET paper-leak controversy.

The CJP gained prominence after its launch in May amid controversy over remarks attributed to Chief Justice of India Surya Kant. Its original X account was withheld in India on May 21, after which it resurfaced under a new handle.

Meanwhile, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge condemned Pradhan for allegedly describing protesting students as "terrorists" and demanded his resignation. Kharge said repeated paper leaks had ruined students' futures and accused the government of branding dissenters as anti-national. He warned that Congress' student campaign, Chhatron Ki Goonj, would intensify nationwide.

Dipke also criticised Pradhan, saying students seeking justice were being labelled terrorists. He alleged that several student deaths linked to the NEET controversy had occurred under the minister's watch.

On Tuesday, protesters held a "diaper protest" at Jantar Mantar and vowed to continue their agitation until Pradhan resigns. —*PTI*

India rebukes Pakistan over J&K remarks at UN meet

UNITED NATIONS, 24 JUNE

India on Tuesday strongly criticised Pakistan for raising Jammu and Kashmir at an informal UN Security Council (UNSC) meeting organised by Pakistan and China, describing the comments as "unwarranted" and asserting that the Union Territory is strictly an internal matter.

India's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish, said it was "incredible" that a co-chair expected to remain balanced had chosen to politicise the forum. He reiterated that Jammu and Kashmir "has always been, is, and will remain" an integral part of India.

The remarks came after Pakistan's UN envoy, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, raised the Kashmir issue during the Arria-formula meeting on implementing UNSC resolutions and maintaining international peace and security. Pakistan is currently serving a two-year term as a non-permanent UNSC member.

Addressing the broader discussion, Harish highlighted the distinction between Chapters VI and VII of the UN Charter, noting that mediation frameworks under Chapter VI are not permanently applicable and should be reviewed in line with changing circumstances. He cited the Palestine issue as an example.

India also argued that Security Council mandates should be reviewed under ongoing UN reform efforts and reiterated its long-standing demand for permanent membership in a reformed and expanded UNSC —*PTI*

BJP govt trying to impose vegetarianism in Bengal: O'Brien

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

Trinamool Congress (TMC) joint secretary Derek O'Brien on Wednesday targeted the BJP over reports that eggs might be excluded from midday meals in West Bengal, alleging that the new government was depriving children of nutrition and trying to "impose vegetarianism" in the state.

Presenting the BJP government's maiden budget on Monday, West Bengal Finance Minister Swapan Dasgupta said ISKCON was expected to assist in food preparation and distribution under the midday meal scheme.

According to reports, ISKCON's new menu would replace eggs with sources of plant-based protein.

"Throw eggs at rivals. But deprive children of nutrition by taking eggs off from midday meals. Imposing vegetarianism. Bengal rejects this," the TMC leader said.

HC refuses to hear Abhishek's travel plea

Meanwhile, the Calcutta High Court on Wednesday refused an urgent hearing to TMC Member of Parliament (MP) Abhishek Banerjee's plea seeking permission to travel abroad for medical treatment, saying that there are treatment facilities within the country.

Banerjee has been asked to cooperate with a probe into alleged provocative comments made him, and not travel abroad without the court's leave. —*PTI*

Nirav must pay $11M to Bank of India: UK court

LONDON, 24 JUNE

The High Court in London has ruled that fugitive diamond merchant Nirav Modi must pay Bank of India over USD 11.5 million on a personal loan guarantee.

Modi, 55, currently in prison fighting extradition to India in a separate USD 2 billion PNB fraud case, had disputed the guarantee linked to his Dubai-based firm, Firestar Diamond FZE.

Justice Simon Tinkler ruled in the bank's favour on all three issues — valid service, liability, and enforceability, finding Modi liable for a principal of USD 4.1 million, with interest bringing the total to USD 11.5 million until March 2026.

Bank of India had pursued the case since 2018, represented by Fladgate LLP. Modi, who represented himself, sought several adjournments citing vision loss, depression, and prison constraints.

A prison transfer also caused delays. Separately, his extradition bid continues, he lost a final appeal in March and is believed to have approached the European Court of Human Rights. —*PTI*

FREE VACCINES FOR HANDLERS

TN starts 'healthy food streets' in 6 districts

CHENNAI, 24 JUNE

The Tamil Nadu government on Wednesday announced the launch of a 'Healthy and Hygienic Food Street' pilot project across six districts, alongside free typhoid vaccinations for food handlers in the state.

Addressing a state-level review meeting of Designated Officers and Food Safety Officers (FSOs) here, Health Minister Arunraj emphasised the government's priority to ensure the supply of quality, hygienic food to the public to prevent diseases.

Taking serious note of allegations that some FSOs were harassing traders, the minister strictly instructed officials to ensure a transparent, corruption-free administration without causing any inconvenience to the public, adhering to the chief minister's directives.

To uplift street food vendors, the government will introduce 'healthy and hygienic food streets' on a pilot basis in Chennai, Tiruchirappalli, Madurai, Salem, Coimbatore, and Tiruppur. Standardised stalls and financial loan assistance will be provided to vendors to ensure safe and hygienic environments.

In a move to prevent communicable diseases, the government will soon roll out a scheme to administer free typhoid vaccines to food handlers and servers working in hotels and street food stalls. Referring to a recent incident in Kanchipuram where workers were severely affected by unsafe food at an industrial site, the minister directed officials to intensify monitoring in high-risk areas. —*PTI*

Cong does not stifle views: Ramesh on Tharoor row

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

Asserting that the Congress is a democratic party that allows diverse viewpoints, General Secretary Jairam Ramesh on Wednesday defended colleague Shashi Tharoor's recent comments on Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Tharoor, the party's Thiruvananthapuram MP, drew internal friction after praising Modi's handling of his bilateral meeting with US President Donald Trump at the G7 Summit — specifically for raising the issue of maritime security and the deaths of three Indian crew members in the Gulf region.

Congress media head Pawan Khera slammed Tharoor over his "admiration" for Modi, saying it appeared to have transcended the physical world, as Tharoor seemed capable of hearing things the prime minister never actually said during his meeting with Trump. Tharoor, however, said he found it extraordinary that a statement about protecting Indian civilian sailors was given a partisan twist. On leaders deviating from the party line, Ramesh said, "We have free and full discussion, frank discussion in party forums. Occasionally, you will have people giving a different point of view, but I see that as a strength of Congress." —*PTI*

Ammonia gas leak toll rises to 10 in Tamil Nadu

CHENNAI, 24 JUNE

The death toll from an ammonia gas leak at a private seafood processing unit in Tamil Nadu's Tiruvallur district has risen to 10, while 68 people remain hospitalised, the Health Department said on Wednesday. The leak occurred during routine operations on 21 June near Periyapalayam. The victims included eight women from Odisha and two persons from Assam. Of the 83 people affected, 68 are undergoing treatment at four hospitals and five have been discharged. Most are migrant workers from Odisha, Assam, Jharkhand, Kerala, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu. Patients suffered breathing difficulties, coughing, chest discomfort and eye irritation. Seventeen are on ventilator support, 21 on oxygen and 30 are stable. *—PTI*

—INSTAGRAM

Sanjay Dutt's firm can't name its whisky 'Godfather'

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

The Delhi High Court has restrained actor Sanjay Dutt-backed Cartel Bros Pvt Ltd from using the word 'Godfather' for its whisky during the pendency of a trademark infringement suit filed by Devans Modern Breweries. Justice Tushar Rao Gedela observed that Devans has been manufacturing beer under the 'Godfather' brand for nearly 40 years and that the trademark enjoys substantial reputation and goodwill. The court held that Cartel Bros could gain an unfair advantage from the established mark, even without mala fide intent. It directed the company to remove all online advertisements and listings carrying the 'Godfather' mark, noting consumers could wrongly associate the whisky with Devans. *—PTI*

ED raids Delhi club owner in Mundra drugs haul probe

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Wednesday conducted searches at five locations in Delhi as part of a money laundering investigation linked to the 2021 Mundra port drugs seizure case. The raids covered premises linked to businessman Harpreet Singh Talwar, alias Kabir Talwar, who operates several popular nightclubs in the capital, along with those of Shamshudeen and others. Talwar was arrested by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) in August 2022 and was recently granted bail by the Gujarat High Court. The probe stems from the September 2021 seizure of 2,988.21 kg of Afghan-origin heroin at Gujarat's Mundra port. The consignment, valued at around Rs 21,000 crore in the international illicit drugs market, had arrived from Iran disguised as semi-processed talc stones. *—PTI*

Two more held for death of schoolgirl in WB bombing

KOLKATA, 24 JUNE

Two more people have been arrested in the murder of 13-year-old Tamanna Khatun in West Bengal's Nadia district, taking the total number of arrests to 13, police said on Wednesday. Sabir Sheikh and Jiarul Sheikh were apprehended during a late-night operation and will be produced before a court. Tamanna, a student from Kaliganj, died after being hit by a bomb allegedly hurled during a Trinamool Congress victory procession following the Kaliganj Assembly bypoll results last year. The arrests came less than a day after Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari assured the victim's family of justice. Police said raids were continuing to trace all those involved in the case. *—PTI*

Rains return to Mumbai & so does misery

City wakes up to flooded roads, uprooted trees after just 300mm rain

MUMBAI, 24 JUNE

People wade through a waterlogged road in Mumbai on Wednesday. A BMC supervisor falls into an open water channel during Mayor Ritu Tawde's inspection of the waterlogged Gandhi Market area in King's Circle *—PTI*

Mumbaikars woke up to flooded streets, waterlogged railway stations and traffic snarls on Wednesday after more than 300 mm of rain lashed parts of the city within 24 hours, a day after the monsoon officially arrived.

Heavy overnight showers inundated low-lying areas, disrupted road and rail traffic and stranded commuters across the metropolis. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued an orange alert for Mumbai, Thane and Palghar, forecasting heavy to very heavy rain, thunderstorms and gusty winds over the next 24 hours.

The Colaba observatory recorded 248 mm of rainfall and Santacruz 225 mm in the 24 hours ending at 8 am. Malvani received 340 mm and Parel 334 mm, among the highest totals. The rainfall recorded at Colaba accounted for nearly 45 per cent of its average June rainfall, while Santacruz received about 42 per cent of its monthly seasonal total.

Waterlogging was reported at Hindmata, King's Circle, Andheri subway and Dadar station, affecting traffic and suburban train services. Several commuters reported delays and overcrowding during peak hours.

Central Railway's Trans-Harbour line between Thane and Vashi/Panvel was disrupted after a track cave-in caused by excessive water flow between Turbhe and Koparkhairane stations. Services were later restored with speed restrictions.

More than 24 BEST bus routes were diverted. A retaining wall collapsed near a residential building in Vikhroli West, while a tree fell on a car in Dadar.

During Mayor Ritu Tawde's inspection of the waterlogged Gandhi Market area in King's Circle, a BMC supervisor fell into an open water channel. Congress MP Varsha Gaikwad shared a video of the incident and accused the civic administration of negligence.

A high tide of 3.41 metres was recorded in the morning, compounding flooding concerns in the city, which is particularly vulnerable to waterlogging during periods of intense rainfall and high tides.

The southwest monsoon reached Mumbai on Tuesday, 13 days later than its normal onset date. *—PTI*

RAIN TRIGGERS LANDSLIDES, FLASH FLOODS IN ARUNACHAL

Incessant rain triggered flash floods in Arunachal Pradesh's Keyi Panyor district on Wednesday, damaging 18 residential units and leaving three people reportedly missing, officials said.

The missing persons were reported from the Neepco project colony near Poosa after an under-construction retaining wall collapsed, inundating low-lying areas.

Heavy rainfall also disrupted road connectivity, with landslides blocking three stretches of the national highway near Potin and Hoj and stranding several travellers.

Arunachal Pradesh has witnessed days of heavy rain, causing flash floods, landslips and infrastructure damage across multiple districts. Authorities have urged residents in vulnerable and riverbank areas to remain alert and avoid unnecessary travel.

LANDSLIDES CUT OFF WEST SIKKIM DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS

Torrential overnight rain triggered multiple landslides on Wednesday, blocking the Gyalshing–Legship road and cutting off West Sikkim's district headquarters from the rest of the state.

Gyalshing recorded 95.2 mm of rainfall in 24 hours, causing sludge and boulders to crash onto the highway.

The worst landslide occurred near Omchung, about 2 km from Gyalshing town.

Excavators worked through the night to clear debris. Officials said at least three major landslides struck the corridor. This area is prone to landslides during rains.

With no alternative route available, the blockade disrupted transport, essential supplies and emergency services.

Kerala HC invalidates oaths taken in names other than 'God'

KOCHI, 24 JUNE

The Kerala High Court has ruled that elected local body representatives must take their oath strictly in the manner prescribed by law, declaring invalid the oaths of several BJP councillors in the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation and a panchayat member who used expressions beyond those permitted.

Justice PV Kunhikrishnan held that the Kerala Municipality Act and Kerala Panchayat Raj Act allow oaths only "in the name of God" or through a solemn affirmation. Invoking specific deities, "Bharathamba" (Mother India), political martyrs, organisations or individuals is not permitted.

The case involved 20 Thiruvananthapuram councillors who took oath in the names of Hindu deities, Bharatha Matha, Gurudeva and political martyrs. In a separate case, a Vadakkencherry grama panchayat member took oath "by God's blessing in the name of Oommen Chandy".

The court said the oath is a solemn constitutional promise and must be administered exactly as prescribed. However, it upheld the validity of the councillors' elections and directed authorities to arrange fresh oath-taking within four weeks.

No penalties were imposed as the members acted in good faith. *—PTI*

M'rashtra engineer fired over unauthorised letter to Adani firm

THANE, 24 JUNE

The Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company has suspended Madan Sangle, the Superintendent Engineer of the Palghar Circle Office, for allegedly sending an "unauthorised" letter to Adani Energy Solutions opposing the installation of smart electricity meters.

The letter stated the company would be responsible for any potential public outcry, or consumer agitation if the existing electricity meters are replaced with smart meters without obtaining prior explicit consent.

The release stated that Sangle bypassed protocol and dispatched a letter directly to the company without prior permission from senior officials.

Top management at Mahavitaran 's Konkan Regional Office deemed it a violation of administrative hierarchy. *—PTI*

We need doctors in India: SC bins plea on high fee

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

During the hearing, the bench said, "One person cannot say that it is exorbitant in private institutions and make it on par with government institutions."

"We need doctors in this country," the Supreme Court observed on Wednesday while refusing to entertain a plea challenging the fee structure in private medical colleges in Rajasthan.

A bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Joymalya Bagchi dismissed a petition against a Rajasthan High Court order that had rejected a similar challenge by a medical aspirant.

The petitioner argued that annual tuition fees in private medical colleges ranged from Rs 18.9 lakh to Rs 25 lakh and were incompatible with the Rs 8 lakh income ceiling prescribed for eligibility under the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) category.

During the hearing, the bench said, "One person cannot say that it is exorbitant in private institutions and make it on par with government institutions," observing that self-financing colleges cannot be expected to charge the same fees as government-run institutions.

The court also noted that students have the option of availing scholarships.

Finding no reason to interfere with the high court's order, the bench dismissed the special leave petition while keeping the question of law open.

The petitioner, who appeared for NEET-UG 2025 under the EWS category, had argued that the fee regulatory committee was duty-bound to frame a rational and equitable fee structure keeping in mind the financial constraints of EWS candidates. *—PTI*

LUCKNOW BUILDING BLAZE

Officer takes a U-turn on 'lapses' charge

LUCKNOW, 24 JUNE

Fire tenders at the site where a fire broke out at a coaching centre in the Aliganj area, in Lucknow *—ANI*

A suspended fire department officer on Wednesday withdrew allegations of negligence against senior officials in connection with the Aliganj building fire in Lucknow that killed 15 people and injured nine others.

Fire Station Second Officer Kamlesh Kumar Singh, suspended after the tragedy, said he was emotionally distressed by the loss of life and had been misled into making a video accusing senior officials of lapses. He apologised and expressed confidence in a fair inquiry.

Meanwhile, the Lucknow Development Authority (LDA) pasted a notice on the building, directing owner Virendra Prasad Shukla to respond within 15 days over alleged bylaw violations and unauthorised commercial use. The structure, approved for residential purposes, housed an animation centre, pet shop and clinic. Officials said demolition action could follow after a hearing on 7 July.

The LDA has also launched an inquiry into why a 2016 demolition order against unauthorised construction was later withdrawn. Investigators are examining possible lapses by officials and whether the building's power consumption exceeded the sanctioned load without approval. *—PTI*

SIR FALLOUT

SC allows petitioner to move HC over exclusion from ration list

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

The Supreme Court on Wednesday allowed a petitioner to withdraw a plea alleging that people excluded from West Bengal's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls were also being removed from the state's ration card database.

A bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Joymalya Bagchi granted liberty to the petitioner to approach the Calcutta High Court. The top court had earlier advised the petitioner to seek relief before the high court.

The plea alleged that beneficiaries whose names were excluded during the SIR process faced the risk of losing access to the Public Distribution System (PDS).

On 4 June, the West Bengal Food and Supplies Department ordered a statewide verification exercise to identify and remove ineligible PDS beneficiaries, linking it to the electoral roll revision process. Categories under scrutiny include absentee, shifted, dead and duplicate electors, as well as individuals whose applications were rejected or deleted during the SIR.

The department, however, clarified that beneficiaries who have appealed before the SIR tribunal or submitted applications under the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) will continue receiving benefits until their cases are decided. *—PTI*

TO CURB CHILD MARRIAGE

M'rashtra mulls DOBs on wedding cards

MUMBAI, 24 JUNE

—ANI

Maharashtra is considering making it mandatory to print the birth dates of brides and grooms on wedding invitation cards as part of efforts to curb child marriage, Women and Child Development Minister Aditi Tatkare told the Assembly on Wednesday.

Replying to a question by BJP MLA Atul Bhatkhalkar, Tatkare said the state has written to Rajasthan to study its practice of including birth dates on wedding cards and will examine adopting a similar system in consultation with the rural development and law departments.

The minister said Maharashtra aims to reduce the incidence of child marriage to below 10 per cent within five years. The state's child marriage rate declined from 21.9 per cent in 2019-21 to 19.6 per cent in 2023-24, compared with the national average of 20.1 per cent.

Authorities prevented 1,434 child marriages and registered 136 FIRs in 2025-26 so far. The corresponding figures were 1,495 prevented marriages in 2024-25 and 1,253 prevented marriages with 108 FIRs in 2023-24. Tatkare said the rise in interventions reflected improved detection and reporting, not an increase in child marriages. Action is being taken against family members as well as facilitators such as priests and musicians. Six districts have been identified for special attention, with migration, particularly for sugarcane-cutting work in Marathwada, cited as a key factor. The government plans targeted outreach among migrant workers and expanded child care and residential facilities to protect children. *—PTI*

SINGAPORE TO AID 400 MIGRANT WORKERS UNPAID FOR MONTHS

SINGAPORE, 24 JUNE

Singapore authorities and labour organisations have stepped in to support around 400 migrant workers, mostly from India and Bangladesh, who have reportedly gone unpaid for three to four months by their employers.

The National Trade Union Congress (NTUC) and the Migrant Workers' Centre (MWC) will provide each worker SGD 100 in cash and SGD 100 in supermarket vouchers. Labour chief Ng Chee Meng said the assistance would help meet daily expenses while efforts continue to recover unpaid salaries.

More than 200 affected workers are currently housed at Tuas View Dormitory. Many said they still owe recruitment agency fees and have accumulated debts. Most expressed a desire to remain in Singapore and seek alternative employment.

The NTUC has identified 150 vacancies with around 40 employers, mainly in construction and air-conditioning services. The Ministry of Manpower (MOM) will issue special passes allowing workers to stay in Singapore while searching for jobs. The workers were employed by KPA Engineering and related firm SK Industries. The MOM is investigating the companies for possible breaches. *—PTI*

BJP wants 2/3rd majority in LS to end quota: Cong

Congress on Wednesday alleged that the BJP is striving for a two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha as its "real and ultimate target" is to be able to amend the Constitution for ending reservation.

In an exclusive interview with PTI Videos, Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh claimed that the ruling party first wants to push delimitation in the garb of women's reservation with the ultimate objective being of ending reservation altogether.

Ramesh said if the government is really concerned about women's reservation it should implement the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam on the current strength of the Lok Sabha, 543. for the next general elections in 2029.

He alleged that Home Minister Amit Shah's efforts to split the TMC and Shiv Sena (UBT) vindicate the 2024 campaign of the Congress that the BJP wanted '400 paar' so that they can "amend the Constitution and finish off reservation".

Asked about the spate of defections in the opposition ranks, Ramesh said, "The single cause for this is the humiliation that the self-styled Chanakya of Indian politics suffered on the 17th of April in the Lok Sabha. He promised prime minister (Narendra Modi) that he would get the three delimitation bills passed. He could not muster more than 298 votes in the Lok Sabha."

Shah thought he could brazen it out and could bamboozle and bulldoze his way through but his bluff was called, Ramesh said.

"I think he decided to take revenge on that day for that humiliation he had been forced to suffer and now he is busy with the 'todh-phod ki rajniti'.He broke the TMC, he's breaking the Shiv Sena, all in his search for a two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha - you're seeing the truth of our 2024 campaign. They were asking for '400 paar' so that they can amend the Constitution to finish off reservation," the Congress general secretary in-charge communications said.

"That was the whole logic of '400 paar' and now you are seeing why he is splitting all these parties, he is splitting up parties in his search for a two-thirds majority to amend the Constitution," Ramesh claimed.

Asked if the BJP is striving for a two-thirds majority to target reservations, the Congress leader said the ruling party's immediate target is the delimitation bill but the real target is ending reservation.

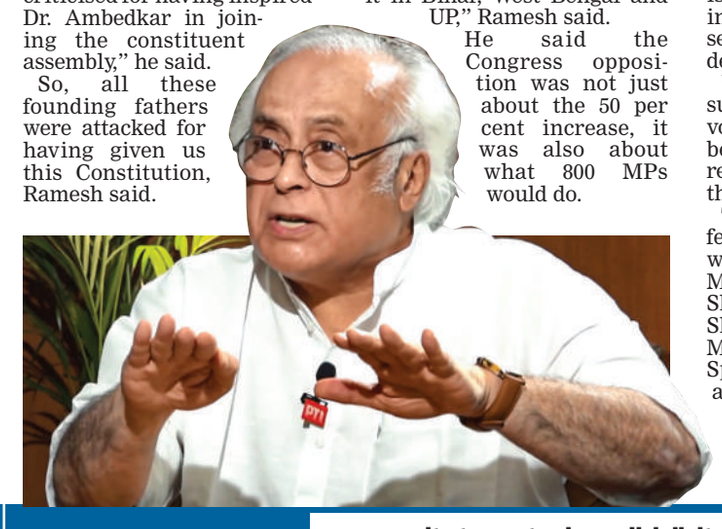
"You look that in 2024 it was very clear what was happening. I mean the ultimate objective is to end reservation as the Constitution has provided and in spite of what the prime minister (Narendra Modi) says, you know the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh is on record as having said that reservation should be done away with, RSS leaders have weighed in against reservation," he said.

So, delimitation is the first milestone they want to pass but ultimately there are three years more left for this government, he said.

"They (BJP) want to amend the Constitution in diverse ways and one fundamental way they want to.... they have always been uncomfortable with this Constitution. Remember on the 26 November, 1949 when this Constitution was adopted by the constituent assembly, the Organiser attacked it," he said.

"The effigies of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. BR Ambedkar, Mahatma Gandhi, were burnt. Of course, Gandhi by then had passed away, but then you know he was also criticised for having inspired Dr. Ambedkar in joining the constituent assembly," he said.

So, all these founding fathers were attacked for having given us this Constitution, Ramesh said.



"The vote by the opposition in Parliament, bringing down the bills was against delimitation and not against women's reservation," the Congress leader said.

"All opposition parties unitedly voted against it. The home minister was humiliated. Modi was angry and it showed on his face. He criticised Congress that it is because of Congress that women's reservation is not being delivered. What had the Congress stated - that you should give women reservation on 543 seats," Ramesh said.

But the BJP's intention is not that, their intention is delimitation and the other target is that after getting two-thirds majority, they will end reservation, he alleged.

"Their real target is to remove reservation (for SCs, STs and OBCs) and not grant women's reservations," he claimed.

On whether the opposition would accept the formula of 50 per cent increase in Lok Sabha seats for every state if it is part of the bill, Ramesh said the issue is about how they are doing the delimitation.

"They did delimitation in Assam. They did delimitation in J-K. Will Gyanesh Kumar do delimitation? You have seen the 'jugalbandi' between the government and the Election Commission. The way the EC works, everyone knows that it does what the Home Minister says. Will you get the delimitation done by the EC which has a big blot on it in Bihar, West Bengal and UP," Ramesh said.

He said the Congress opposition was not just about the 50 per cent increase, it was also about what 800 MPs would do.

"In 500 odd MPs, they do not get a chance to speak and you want to get 815 MPs. For whom are you doing this? And what happens to the Rajya Sabha? There are questions about that and the government is silent," he said.

"We want that after the caste census, delimitation be done and the next Lok Sabha should be conducted on 543 seats with one-third reserved for women," he asserted.

"The Home Minister thinks he's going to get 348 which is the minimum required under various permutations and combinations - you require 2/3 of those presented voting. So even if you assume certain parties may not be present, in the worst case scenario, you still require 348 so far," he said.

Asked if the DMK would abstain, Ramesh said he is not going to predict what parties are going to do.

"All I know is that he (Shah) has broken the TMC. He's broken the Shiv Sena. He's gone from 298 to 26 more. That means he's reached 324. He still has a long way to go. I don't think he's going to get a two-thirds majority in this Lok Sabha. They will not get two thirds majority in future polls as well because the people -- Dalits, backward and adivasis -- know that they want a two-thirds majority to change the Constitution. Their (BJP's) advisors were themselves saying that they need a new Constitution," Ramesh said.

On 17 April, the Constitution amendment bill to implement reservation for women in legislatures in 2029, and an increase in the number of seats of the Lok Sabha, was defeated in the Lower House.

While 298 members voted in support of the Bill, 230 MPs voted against it. Of 528 members who voted, the bill required 352 votes for a two-thirds majority.

The Shiv Sena (UBT) suffered another split this week with six of its nine Lok Sabha MPs pledging allegiance to Shiv Sena led by Eknath Shinde. Also, 20 rebel TMC MPs have met Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and announced their merger with the NCPI, a Tripura-based registered unrecognised political party. —*PTI*

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR سالار

Can anyone survive as PM in today's Britain?

Keir Starmer has resigned as leader of the Labour Party and, consequently, as the United Kingdom's prime minister, becoming the sixth British premier in a decade to leave office. Despite repeated assurances that he would fight on, the pressure following Andy Burnham's emphatic victory in the Makerfield by-election proved too great to resist.

Unlike the chaotic departures of Conservative predecessors Boris Johnson and Liz Truss, Starmer sought to engineer a more orderly transition. His resignation statement was measured and dignified, avoiding the avalanche of cabinet resignations that have become a hallmark of recent political upheavals. Yet his emotional reflection on his time in office revealed a leader acutely aware that he had fallen short of expectations.

Starmer's difficulties did not begin in government. On the eve of Labour's landslide victory in the 2024 general election, his personal popularity was already historically weak for an incoming prime minister. According to Ipsos, he entered Downing Street with a net satisfaction rating of minus 21, with 31 per cent of voters satisfied with his performance and 52 per cent dissatisfied. It was the first time a party leader had secured a parliamentary majority while carrying such a significantly negative approval rating.

However, in the volatile political climate that followed the Brexit referendum, such figures did not appear extraordinary. His predecessor, Rishi Sunak, began the 2024 election campaign with an even lower net satisfaction rating of minus 56.

There were expectations that Starmer's popularity would improve once he had achieved what Labour had failed to do for 14 years — return the party to power. Historically, new prime ministers have benefited from a post-election boost. Tony Blair's ratings soared to plus 60 after Labour's 1997 landslide victory, while David Cameron's approval rose sharply after forming the coalition government in 2010.

Starmer did experience a rebound, but it was modest. His net favourability briefly rose into positive territory, reaching plus three in early post-election polling. Yet the recovery proved shallow. Unlike Blair's prolonged honeymoon period, Starmer's popularity barely climbed above neutral before beginning another decline.

Ironically, his commanding parliamentary majority masked deeper weaknesses. Similar claims of political dominance had surrounded Boris Johnson after the Conservatives' 2019 victory, when commentators predicted a decade of Tory rule based on the realignment of former Labour strongholds in the so-called "red wall". Instead, Johnson was forced out after just over three years and the Conservatives later suffered a devastating electoral collapse.

The roots of Starmer's downfall can be traced to a problem that also afflicted his predecessor as Labour leader, Jeremy Corbyn. Between 2017 and 2019, Corbyn's approval ratings plunged from a competitive minus 11 to minus 44 as Labour struggled to maintain a fragile coalition of voters divided by Brexit.

Starmer's rise and fall followed a remarkably similar trajectory. In both cases, Labour's polling strength was driven less by enthusiasm for the opposition and more by public dissatisfaction with the government of the day. The 2024 election demonstrated this reality starkly. Labour secured around 64 per cent of parliamentary seats with only 34 per cent of the national vote, the lowest vote share ever won by a majority government.

Like Corbyn before him, Starmer found himself squeezed from both sides of the political spectrum. Corbyn's Labour lost support to Nigel Farage's Brexit Party on one flank and the pro-European Liberal Democrats on the other. Starmer faced a comparable challenge in the mid-2020s.

Reform UK steadily eroded Labour's support in post-industrial and working-class areas, while the Green Party and pro-Gaza independent candidates attracted progressive urban voters. The Greens quadrupled their representation in Parliament in 2024, while independents achieved historic victories in several traditional Labour strongholds.

These divisions were reflected in Labour's performance in office. The party suffered by-election defeats to both Reform UK and the Greens, endured poor local election results across England, and failed to make significant gains against a weakened and scandal-hit Scottish National Party.

Starmer's resignation comes almost exactly a decade after the Brexit referendum of 2016, a reminder that the political divisions unleashed by that vote continue to shape British politics. While Brexit itself no longer dominates public debate, the identities and loyalties forged during that period remain deeply entrenched.

Political scientist Tim Bale has argued that Britain is now characterised by a form of two-bloc polarisation. Voters are broadly divided into competing identity-based camps, with attitudes shaped fundamentally by their position on Brexit. Although the issue is discussed less frequently today, it continues to influence political alignments beneath the surface.

The challenge for leaders such as Starmer has been to hold together coalitions that are united primarily by opposition to a common enemy but divided on many other issues. Such alliances can deliver electoral victories, but they often prove fragile in government.

In the end, Starmer's premiership illustrates the difficulty of governing in an era of fragmented political identities. His resignation marks not only the end of his leadership, but also another chapter in a decade of extraordinary instability at the top of British politics. —*PTI*

Hormuz's future is unsettled even as more ships venture through

The Indian-flagged vessel 'Jag Laadki', carrying approximately 80,886 MT of UAE-sourced crude oil, berthed at Adani Port, Mundra, on Wednesday —*ANI*

Ship traffic has picked up in the Strait of Hormuz since Iran and the US signed an interim deal to end a war that constricted global oil supplies and fuelled inflation, but questions surrounding control of the vital waterway and whether vessels will be charged tolls to cross it could interfere with negotiations to forge a lasting peace.

Tehran and Washington clashed over the Strait of Hormuz again this past weekend. Citing Israel's latest attacks on Lebanon, Iran declared that it reclosed the strait. The US was quick to contest that. Maritime tracking data showed that dozens of ships passed through on Saturday and Sunday, though far fewer than the daily average before the war.

US President Donald Trump suggested the US might impose its own tolls on strait crossings if a final deal with Iran was not reached during the countries' 60-day negotiating period. Passage was free before the war, but Iran last month established a new governmental authority to collect money from ships and has said it still expects vessels to register with the Persian Gulf Strait Authority.

No one country owns Hormuz, which borders both Iran and Oman. Last week's memorandum of understanding allowed Iran to manage the strait for now while holding discussions with Oman and six other Gulf states "to define the future administration and maritime services" of the waterway. Iran agreed not to charge transiting vessels tolls for 60 days.

Legal experts and maritime associations have repeatedly stressed that a toll regime would upend decades of international trade precedent involving the world's waters. If the US and Iran cement a final deal, analysts say it could take months for the flow of oil, natural gas, fertilizer and other commodities to return to prewar levels.

Here's a closer look at the status of the Strait of Hormuz:

Ships are moving but not at the prewar pace

Data and analytics company Kpler said its tracking confirmed 71 ships travelled through the strait between Friday and Sunday, with a peak of 35 crossings Saturday. In contrast, about 100 to 130 vessels a day made the journey before the US and Israel launched strikes on Iran in late February, and Tehran responded with its own attacks and effective closure of the waterway.

As part of the provisional Iran-US framework, Iran said it would conduct demining work within 30 days and remove "technical and military obstacles" to shipping. Iran's lead negotiator and parliament speaker, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, told Iranian state media that his country would manage the strait in accordance with international maritime law.

The main central route of Hormuz is still mined and remains closed. Ships have been using the smaller northern route, which goes through Iranian waters, and the southern route, which goes through Omani waters. But "caution is still clear" in the many vessels either sticking to Iran's prescribed route or trying to conceal their positions and identities by keeping their transponders off, Kpler said.

Both Iran and US have threatened tolls

Early in the war, Iran threatened to attack ships that tried to use Hormuz without its approval and began vetting vessels in a pay-to-pass scheme that shipping analysts dubbed the "tollbooth".

Although the Trump administration imposed sanctions on the Persian Gulf Strait Authority late last month to oppose what Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent described as Tehran's attempt to extort global maritime trade, the President on Saturday suggested the US could impose its own tolls for "services rendered as the Guardian Angel to the countries of the Middle East."

The administration has not provided details on how the US would apply any charges on ships if talks with Iran do not yield a completed agreement. Shipping analysts have expressed surprise at how much control over the strait the inital agreement gave Iran.

Experts say tolls would violate maritime law

Collecting tolls in the strait could violate an enduring principle of international maritime trade: freedom of peaceful navigation. The concept was codified by the United Nations' Convention on the Law of the Sea, which took effect in 1994.

The treaty provides ships the right of unimpeded "transit passage" through more than 100 straits worldwide, including Hormuz. It only applies to natural waterways, so authorities can charge fees for ships to traverse man-made waterways such as the Panama Canal and the Suez Canal.

Oman is among the more than 170 countries that have ratified the UN convention, but the US and Iran are not. Maritime associations have argued that all nations remain subject to the treaty's provisions.

James Kraska, a US Naval War College professor of international maritime law, notes that the US and Iran are both members of the International Maritime Organization, the U.N. agency that oversees safety and security measures in international shipping. Both countries also are parties to the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, a treaty that governs standards for building and operating ships.

In straits like Hormuz, fees can only be applied at established ports of entry or for services specifically requested by a ship, such as specialised navigation aid through hazardous areas, according to Kraska, who is also a visiting professor at Harvard Law School. —*PTI*

WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH IRAN AND US?

IRAN & PAK REFUTE US, SAY BALLISTIC MISSILES NOT PART OF MOU

ISLAMABAD, 24 JUNE

Iran's ballistic missile was not part of the 14-point memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the United States and will not be part of any such arrangement in the future, said President Masoud Pezeshkian on Tuesday.

Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif echoed the sentiment during a meeting with Pezeshkian and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi alleging "double standards".

The comments come as several US and Israeli officials have been demanding a curb to Iran's ballistic missile arsenal – which was one of the largest in the region – and was one of President Donald Trump's stated objectives.

"The discussion over our missiles does not exist in the MoU, and it never will," Pezeshkian said. He said that Iran's ballistic missiles had always been "non-negotiables".

"Those who speak of human rights are telling a great lie," he added. "If we were unable to defend ourselves, they certainly would not have shown mercy to our country and would have sought to destroy our power."

Sharif, warned that "spoilers" were seeking to "scuttle the peace deal" because they "they don't want Iran to come out of the ashes of war".

"There cannot be double standards where some countries can have ballistic missiles and Iran should not," he added. "You cannot digest this kind of duplicity."

'MOU A DECLARATION OF US DEFEAT'

Iran's powerful Parliament Speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf says the Islamabad Memorandum was "a declaration of America's defeat" claiming that the agreement was not the result of pressure but of Iran's resistance and dignity, according to state-run Press TV.

Qalibaf reaffirmed Iran's readiness to expand cooperation with all Islamic countries based on mutual respect, non-interference, and neighbourliness. *—Salar News*

SENATE PASSES WAR POWERS RESOLUTION, REBUKING TRUMP

WASHINGTON, 24 JUNE

The US Senate for the first time approved a war powers resolution, demanding that President Donald Trump halt the war in Iran or seek congressional approval before continuing military action.

While the resolution is largely symbolic, and does not carry the full force of law, it reflects the growing concerns from a number of Republican lawmakers in both the House and Senate over both the war and the deal Trump struck with Iran to end it. The House approved the resolution earlier this month.

It was the 10th time the Senate has tried to stop the war, and the outcome, on a vote of 50-48 on Tuesday, was a stunning turnaround from past efforts as a four Republicans joined the Democrats, while two others were absent, meaning that the Reds didn't have the numbers to block it. One Democrat, notably, voted against the resolution.

The vote comes as the Pentagon is seeking USD 80 billion from Congress mostly for the Iran war as it backfills munitions and stockpiles.

Trump responded angrily Tuesday night on his Truth Social.

"So, I have Iran on the ropes, ready to go down for the fall... and the US Senate decides to have a poorly timed and meaningless War Powers Act Vote," Trump wrote, adding it "provided aid and comfort" to Iran.

Trump called the four Republicans "losers," and added: "These Senators have just made my job more difficult, but I will get it done, one way or the other." *—Agencies*

UN NUKE BOSS SAYS IRAN INSPECTIONS PART OF DEAL, DISPUTES TEHRAN

TOKYO, 24 JUNE

The UN's International Atomic Energy Agency head Rafael Mariano Grossi said that Iranian nuclear enrichment sites would be visited by his inspectors under the US-Iran interim deal.

The UN agency is viewed as key in determining the status of Iran's nuclear stockpile, and Grossi's comments were the firmest yet. However, Iran has stated that the nuclear inspection was not part of the agreement, refuting claims made by US President Donald Trump and Vice President JD Vance.

Since Israel launched the 12-day war on Iran in 2025, the IAEA has been blocked by Tehran from visiting enrichment sites where the Islamic Republic is believed to store enough highly enriched uranium to potentially build as many as 10 nuclear weapons, should it decide to rush for the bomb. Iran long has maintained that its program is peaceful, though it is the only country in the world to have uranium enriched up to 60 per cent purity without a weapons program.

"I can understand political statements, they are part of the reality, but the fundamental thing I would like to remind you and draw your attention to is that there has been a Memorandum of Understanding, signed by both Presidents," he told journalists at a news conference at the tsunami-hit Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.

The accord "says explicitly that the nuclear activities that are going to be carried out with regards to the nuclear material facilities will be supervised by the IAEA -- in all letters," he said.

Grossi added: "Obviously, to do that, we will have to inspect. Whether this happens the day after tomorrow or in one week oraa in 10 days, it's important, but not essential. This is going to happen." *—PTI*

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio with UAE President Mohammed Bin Zayed in Abu Dabhi, on Wednesday *—x @SECRUBIO*

LEBANON NOT PART OF IRAN DEAL, HAVE TO DISMANTLE PROXIES: RUBIO

ABU DHABI, 24 JUNE

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Tuesday said discussions over a Lebanon ceasefire are separate from ongoing negotiations with Iran.

"It's separate because Lebanon is a sovereign country. It has a government. And when it comes to Lebanon and what's happening inside of Lebanon, we're going to negotiate a deal directly with the Lebanese Government," Rubio told reporters after landing in Abu Dhabi as part of his visit to the Persian Gulf region from 23 to 25 June. He noted that he had recently spoken to Lebanese President Joseph Aoun.

The deal, however, Iran consistently notes, has called for ending the war on "all fronts", including in Lebanon.

> **We know that Israel cannot tolerate even the slightest possibility of peace. Looking at the statements they have made over the last 10 days, it becomes clear that what we are facing is not the reasoning of a state, but rather a group of radicals that has lost its mind. The situation is so dire that everyone—both in government and in opposition—is accusing one another of not killing enough people.**
> —Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey President

Rubio added that lasting peace requires dismantling Iran's proxies – groups like Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Houthis that Tehran calls its Axis of Resistance.

"You can't have the end of hostilities and conflict in the region as long as Iranian proxies are launching missiles and drones from Iraq and are participating in terrorism," Rubio said.He added that Iran and Oman cannot charge tolls for ships in the Strait of Hormuz. *—ANI*

China's tech rise an opportunity, not a threat: Premier at Summer Davos

HONG KONG, 24 JUNE

Chinese Premier Li Qiang on Wednesday defended China's rapid technological advances, arguing that they should be viewed as a global opportunity rather than a threat, while rejecting claims that state subsidies are the primary driver behind the country's high-tech success.

Speaking at the opening of the World Economic Forum's "Summer Davos" meeting in Dalian, Li said concerns in some countries over China's growing strength in sectors such as artificial intelligence, electric vehicles, robotics, semiconductors and renewable energy were misplaced.

Referring to warnings about a possible "China Shock 2.0", Li said the world should instead see a "China Opportunity 2.0", bringing wider access to advanced technologies and shared economic benefits.

He maintained that Chinese products and innovations offered affordable options to global markets and were empowering development rather than undermining it.

Li also dismissed accusations from the United States and Europe that heavy government subsidies had given Chinese firms an unfair advantage.

He said China's large domestic market, rapid adoption of new technologies and strong corporate investment were the key factors behind its technological progress. *—PTI*

Countries face extreme climate patterns globally

PARIS, 24 JUNE

An unprecedented heatwave is gripping parts of Europe, with reports suggesting at least 94 million people could face temperatures above 35°C, particularly in France and Spain.

France recorded its hottest June day on Tuesday, with a national average temperature of 29.8°C, according to Meteo France. Several weather stations reported temperatures exceeding 40°C. The heatwave also triggered major power outages in western France, affecting about 68,000 homes in Brittany.

In the UK, red heat alerts have been issued in some areas, where temperatures could reach 38°C on Thursday.

NEPAL SWELTERS

Nepal's Department of Hydrology and Meteorology has urged residents in the Terai region to take precautions as a heatwave is expected to persist for another two to three days. Temperatures in parts of Lumbini and Sudur Paschim have crossed 38°C and could touch 40°C amid a weak monsoon.

JAPAN BRACES FOR TYPHOONS

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi warned citizens to remain on high alert as Typhoon 7 approaches Okinawa and Typhoon 8 develops. *—Salar News*

France confirms first Ebola case

France has confirmed an Ebola case in a person returning from a humanitarian mission in a virus-hit region of Congo. The patient, who has not been identified, is in stable condition and is being treated at a specialised facility under strict safety measures. Health authorities have launched an epidemiological investigation and are tracing contacts, who will undergo 21 days of home isolation and monitoring. Congo has reported 1,094 confirmed Ebola cases and 277 deaths since the outbreak was declared in May.

DEMOCRATS GET 2ND WIND

Mamdani backed candidates sweep NY Primaries

WASHINGTON, 24 JUNE

New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani, celebrates with Democratic Congressional candidate Darializa Avila Chevalie, on Tuesday *—PTI*

New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani waded into Democratic US House primaries to boost three progressives over establishment-backed candidates. All of them won on Tuesday, essentially ensuring that two self-described democratic socialists will be elected to Congress in their deep blue districts, placing three Mamdani allies in Congress come January.

The Mayor said it was a question of electing "better Democrats" who would "put working people back at the heart of politics." The approach consternated some in Democratic leadership, but the outcome showcased Mamdani's rising influence.

When Mamdani took the stage in Brooklyn on Tuesday night, the crowd chanted "DSA," the initials for the Democratic Socialists of America.

It was just the latest sign of an ascendant political movement, and two of the candidates successfully backed by Mamdani are democratic socialists.

In the primary for retiring US Rep Nydia Velazquez's seat, state Assembly Member Claire Valdez, endorsed by Mamdani, beat out Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso.

Democratic US Rep Adriano Espaillat lost his bid for reelection to Darializa Avila Chevalier, another Mamdani-backed democratic socialist. Avila Chevalier hasn't held public office before and once helped organise pro-Palestinian protests at Columbia University.

A third candidate backed by Mamdani, former city comptroller Brad Lander, defeated US Rep Dan Goldman by running to his political Left. The race partly revolved around the war in Gaza, with Lander assailing Goldman for not being critical of Israel. *—PTI*

Andy inches closer to power as Keir's ally steps aside

LONDON, 24 JUNE

Andy Burnham took a step closer to becoming Britain's next prime minister without a contest on Wednesday when Cabinet minister Darren Jones, touted as a possible rival, said he would not run.

Jones, an ally of Prime Minister Keir Starmer, had been encouraged to run so that Burnham faces a test of his ideas and policies in front of Labour lawmakers and members.

Jones cautioned Burnham against veering too far to the Left in economic policy, a concern of some in the business and financial worlds. Burnham also is expected to choose a new Treasury chief to replace Starmer appointee Rachel Reeves.

Meanwhile Starmer, seeking to secure a legacy before he leaves office, faces the weekly Prime Minister's Questions session in Parliament before flying to Berlin to meet E5 European allies for talks on Ukraine and the Middle East.

Starmer announced his plan to resign on Monday and will be out of office within weeks once the Labour Party picks a new leader. *—PTI*

Activist Dr Mahrang Baloch was handed a life sentence recently *—ANI*

Thunberg, Amnesty slam Pak for jailing Baloch activist

NEW YORK, 24 JUNE

Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberga and human rights watchdog Amnesty International have strongly criticised Pakistan over a life imprisonment sentence handed down to prominent Baloch activist Dr Mahrang Baloch.

In a video posted to her Instagram account, Thunberg said that Baloch's conviction treated "peaceful dissent as a crime." She also described Balochistan as "an occupied territory by Pakistan."

She further referred to Mahrang's lawyer Iman Mazari, who is now facing imprisonment. "Demand accountability, demand due process, and demand their freedom," she asserted.

Meanwhile, in a press release, Amnesty International's Acting Regional Director for South Asia, Isabelle Lassee, accused authorities of cynically employing anti-terrorism legislation against human rights defenders. The organisation demanded their immediate release, along with the withdrawal of all charges connected to their activism.

The criticism follows a ruling by an anti-terrorism court in Quetta that sentenced Baloch and Shah Jee to life imprisonment over their alleged involvement in a 2024 protest during which a security official was killed. The two are leading members of the Baloch Yakjehti Committee, a civil rights movement based in Balochistan province. *—Salar News*

—PTI

Bibi finally testifies in corruption trial

TEL AVIV, 24 JUNE

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has testified in his corruption trial for the final time. He is on trial for three corruption cases, which have stretched for 98 hearings across 18 months. He is charged with three counts of fraud and breach, and one count of accepting a bribe as positive media coverage. "The goal was to go through with a fine-tooth comb, to look for something; they found nothing," Netanyahu said, per local media reports. "They interrogated all my relatives and family, methods of interrogation that are unbelievable," he added. The trial will likely go on for several more months. *—Salar News*

Ukraine targets gas, satellite infra in Russia

KYIV, 24 JUNE

Ukraine said it struck a major natural gas processing plant and two military satellite communication centres deep inside Russia in overnight attacks, as Kyiv intensifies its long-range strike campaign. Ukraine's General Staff said the Orenburg Gas Processing Plant, more than 1,200 km from the front line, caught fire after the attack. The facility is one of Russia's largest gas complexes and produces materials used in rocket engines, solid rocket fuel and gunpowder. The military also reported strikes on satellite communication centres near Moscow and in the Vladimir region. Separately, Ukraine said it targeted military facilities in Crimea, including two airfields and missile systems. Russia claimed it shot down 323 Ukrainian drones overnight, while Ukraine said Russia launched 101 drones. *—PTI*

US slaps more sanctions on Cuban firms

SAN JUAN, 24 JUNE

The US has imposed new sanctions on five Cuban state-linked entities and a relative of former president Raul Castro, a move analysts warn could deepen Cuba's economic crisis and deter foreign investment. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the measures target firms linked to GAESA, the military-run conglomerate believed to control nearly 40 per cent of Cuba's economy. The sanctioned entities include logistics company AUSA, financial firm Rafin SA, Banco Financiero Internacional, Geominera SA and steel producer Empresa Siderurgica Jose Marti. Cuba condemned the sanctions, while analysts said businesses dealing with the targeted firms risk losing access to the US financial system, further complicating investment. *—PTI*

2 from Japan held in China with rare earth minerals

TOKYO, 24 JUNE

China has detained two Japanese nationals suspected of attempting to smuggle prohibited items, Japanese officials said on Wednesday, in a case reportedly linked to rare earth materials. Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Minoru Kihara said Chinese customs authorities informed Japanese consulates that one citizen was detained on 18 May and another a week later in connection with the same case. China's Foreign Ministry confirmed the detentions, saying the pair had violated Chinese laws. Japanese media reported the detainees were employees of a major machinery manufacturer and may have attempted to transport rare earth-related materials. *—PTI*

Hindustan Copper Ltd gets green nod for Rajasthan mine

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

State-owned Hindustan Copper Ltd (HCL) has received forest clearance from the Rajasthan government for mining at the Chandmari copper mine in Jhunjhunu district, co-terminus with the lease period, HCL stated in a filing to the BSE. "It is informed that the Forest Department, Government of Rajasthan, vide its Letter dated 19 July (received on 23 July), has granted forest clearance co-terminus to Chandmari copper mine lease period in District Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan, of Hindustan Copper Ltd," the filing said. The company has planned a capital expenditure of Rs 7,188.90 crore over the next five years for mine expansion. It will spend Rs 450.51 crore in the current year, followed by Rs 1,421.73 crore in 2027, Rs 1,993.70 crore in 2028, Rs 2,227.18 crore in 2029, and Rs 1,095.48 crore in 2030. HCL is also targeting a near-threefold increase in ore production capacity, from 4.21 million tonnes per annum in FY26 to 12.20 MTPA by FY30, as part of its Corporate Plan Vision for 2030.—*PTI*

Rupee rises 21P to close at 94.55 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 24 JUNE

The rupee appreciated by 21 paise to settle at 94.55 against the US dollar on Wednesday on the back of a steep fall in global crude oil prices. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, was trading lower by 2.05 per cent at USD 75.50 per barrel in futures trade. Positive sentiments in the domestic equity markets further supported the local unit, according to forex traders. At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 94.88 and traded in the range of 94.55-94.93 during the day. It settled at 94.55, up 21 paise from its previous close. The rupee declined 13 paise to close at 94.76 against the US dollar on Tuesday. —*PTI*

Amitabh Bachchan sells DP Wires stake for Rs 2 cr

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

Bollywood megastar Amitabh Bachchan has pared his holding in steel wires manufacturer DP Wires Ltd by selling nearly 1 per cent stake for Rs 2.48 crore through an open market transaction. Bachchan offloaded 1,23,622 equity shares representing 0.79 per cent stake in the Madhya Pradesh-based company, as per the bulk deal data available on the National Stock Exchange (NSE). At the end of the March quarter, Bachchan held 2.11 per cent stake or 3.27 lakh shares in DP Wires. Meanwhile, the veteran actor purchased 41,566 shares at an average price of Rs 199.90 per piece, amounting to Rs 83.09 lakh, according to the NSE data —*PTI*

BHIM payment transaction triples in 11 months

HYDERABAD, 24 JUNE

Monthly transaction volumes on the BHIM Payments App more than tripled over an 11-month period, surging from 79.64 million in June 2025 to 244 million in May 2026, according to a release on Wednesday by app developer NPCI BHIM Services Limited. The platform processed transactions worth Rs 26,952 crore in May 2026, it said. Mirroring the national trend, BHIM's transaction volumes in Telangana tripled between June 2025 and May 2026, with groceries (23.9 per cent), food outlets (18.1 per cent), and quick commerce (11.6 per cent) leading merchant categories. The app supports over 15 regional languages and is optimised for low-connectivity environments, enabling deeper digital payments adoption across rural and semi-urban areas, the release added. —*PTI*

Adani targets 10 GW nuclear power capacity by 2035

Adani outlines three steps to streamline the organisation

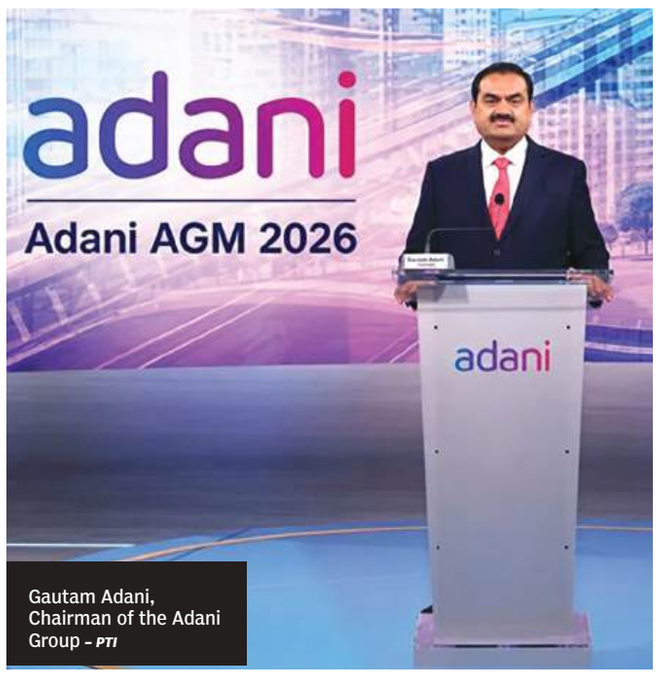
NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

The Adani Group plans to build 10 gigawatts (GW) of nuclear power capacity by 2035, Chairman Gautam Adani said on Wednesday, marking the conglomerate's entry into atomic energy as it expands an integrated power platform spanning thermal, renewable, hydro, gas and transmission assets.

Addressing shareholders at the group's annual general meeting and on his birthday, Adani said land had been identified for the nuclear venture, Adani Atomic Energy, which he described as a key part of the group's strategy to support India's long-term energy security amid growing geopolitical uncertainty and rising electricity demand.

"With land identified and a 10 GW targeted capacity by 2035, we are positioning ourselves early to serve the growing national demand for clean, round-the-clock power," he said.

The announcement comes as the conglomerate accelerates investments across the energy value chain, seeking to position itself at the centre of India's evolving energy strategy at a time when energy security has re-emerged as a national priority.



Gautam Adani, Chairman of the Adani Group – *PTI*

To execute its next-decade vision, Adani outlined three foundational steps to streamline the organisation: introducing a decentralised, three-layer structure across headquarters and sites to cut bureaucracy and sharpen accountability, restructuring contractor relations, and placing worker dignity at the core of its transformation.

The comments come as the conglomerate accelerates investments across the energy value chain, from mining and fuel supply to power generation, transmission, distribution and emerging clean-energy technologies.

- Gautam Adani outlined three foundational steps to streamline the organisation: introducing a decentralised, three-layer structure to cut bureaucracy and sharpen accountability, restructuring contractor relations, and centre worker's dignity.

Adani said the group invested a record more than Rs 1.5 lakh crore in infrastructure during the 2025-26 fiscal year, accounting for more than 30 per cent of India's total new private-sector capital expenditure.

The group's energy expansion is being led by Adani Power, which is executing what Adani called India's largest private-sector power capital expenditure programme, involving investments of more than Rs 2 lakh crore and a target to reach 45 gigawatts of generation capacity within five years.

For FY26, the Adani portfolio reported a revenue of Rs 2.92 lakh crore, up 7.4 per cent from a year earlier. —*ANI*

ON BSE & NSE

4 newly demerged Vedanta firms go public

MUMBAI, 24 JUNE

Vedanta Group marked a defining milestone in Indian corporate history with the successful listing of four newly demerged companies on the BSE and NSE.

The listing of Vedanta Aluminium, Vedanta Oil & Gas, Vedanta Iron & Steel and Vedanta Power was commemorated in a ceremony at the stock exchanges.

Vedanta Aluminium, India's largest aluminium producer and the world's third-largest, has begun operating independently. It plans to double capacity to 6 million tonnes per annum and become the world's largest integrated aluminium producer.

Vedanta Oil & Gas is one of India's leading private-sector oil and gas businesse. The company has a long-term ambition to scale production to 500,000 barrels per day.

Vedanta Iron & Steel is backed by nearly 4 billion tonnes of iron ore resources and approximately 800 KTPA of metallurgical coke capacity.

The company has a roadmap to scale up to 15 MTPA and is focused on high-value segments including electrical steel, specialty and green steel products.

Vedanta Power is India's fifth-largest thermal power producer with 4.2 GW operational capacity. The company has a long-term vision to scale towards 20 GW, supporting India's industrial and digital growth while evaluating opportunities in nuclear and clean energy.

Vedanta Ltd remains the Group's flagship listed company, led by Hindustan Zinc, the world's largest integrated zinc producer and leading silver producer.

Its portfolio spans copper, nickel, ferroalloys, strategic minerals, and Fujairah Gold, while.

Together, these five companies represent some of India's most strategically important natural resources, energy and critical minerals businesses, positioned to create long-term value for investors and shareholders while supporting India's rapid economic growth. —*PTI*

RBI schedules Rs 28,000 cr G-Secs underwriting auction

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is set to conduct underwriting auction for the sale and re-issue of Government Securities worth Rs 28,000 crore this week, as per a statement by the apex bank on Wednesday.

The release said, "Government of India has announced the sale (re-issue) of Government Securities," through auction which will "be held on June 25, 2026 (Thursday)."

It added, according to the extant scheme of underwriting commitment notified on November 14, 2007, the amounts of Minimum Underwriting Commitment (MUC) and the minimum bidding commitment under Additional Competitive Underwriting (ACU) auction, applicable to each Primary Dealer (PD) on offer include 6.68 per cent GS 2040 and 7.43 per cent GS 2076 with a notified amount of Rs 17,000 crore and Rs 11,000 crore, respectively.

According to the release, the underwriting auction will be held on June 25, 2026, using a multiple price bidding method. Primary Dealers can submit their bids electronically through the RBI's e-Kuber platform between 9 and 9.30 am on the day of the auction. —*ANI*

SENSEX JUMPS 790 PTS

Market rebounds amid softening crude prices

MUMBAI, 24 JUNE

Sensex and Nifty rebounded nearly 1 per cent on Wednesday after falling sharply in the previous session, propelled by softening crude oil prices and hectic buying in bank, financial and IT shares.

BSE Sensex jumped 790.54 points (+1.04 per cent) to settle at 76,991.22. During the day, it surged 989.69 points (+1.29 per cent) to 77,190.37. While the NSE Nifty climbed 197.55 points (+0.83 per cent) to end at 24,021.65.

From the Sensex pack, InterGlobe Aviation, Trent, Tech Mahindra, Bajaj Finance, ICICI Bank, Infosys, HDFC Bank and Tata Consultancy Services were among the winners. In contrast, NTPC, Tata Steel, Maruti and Bharat Electronics were among the laggards.

Foreign Institutional Investors bought equities worth Rs 17.86 crore on Tuesday. Brent crude dropped 1.69 per cent to USD 75.78 per barrel.

A senior US official has said that US and India are "very, very close" to concluding a historic bilateral trade deal that will open the 1.4 billion-strong Indian market to American goods on reciprocal and mutually beneficial terms.

"Sentiment improved as easing geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and a further decline in crude oil prices helped restore risk appetite and support broader market participation," said Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money.

On Tuesday, the Sensex had tanked 893.39 points (-1.16 per cent) to settle at 76,200.68. The Nifty dropped 278.80 points (-1.16 per cent) to end at 23,824.10. —*PTI*

Investor registration down 2.5%: NSE

MUMBAI, 24 JUNE

Amid the market volatility due to the ongoing geopolitical tensions, new investor registrations in India's stock markets declined 2.5 per cent month-on-month to 10.5 lakh in, with Southern and Western India leading the slowdown in investor additions, according to a report by the National Stock Exchange (NSE).

The report noted that while investor registrations declined during the month, the pace of reduction was the slowest recorded in the past 12 months.

On a year-on-year basis, new investor additions were 8.2 per cent lower than in May 2025. Southern India recorded the sharpest decline, with investor additions falling 16.6 per cent year-on-year, while Western India witnessed an 8.7 per cent decline during the same period.

Despite the slowdown, North India continued to account for the largest share of new investor registrations in the country.

The region contributed 42.2 per cent of total new additions during May 2026, followed by Southern India at 22.3 per cent, Western India at 21.2 per cent and Eastern India at 14

INVESTORS OVER-SUBSCRIBE INDIAN RAIL OFS

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

Institutional investors on Wednesday over-subscribed the government's offer for sale (OFS) of Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC).

Non-retail investors put in bids for over 18.74 crore IRFC shares, or 1.59 times of over 11.76 crore shares reserved for them. Indicative price for the bids is Rs 91.07 a share, stock exchange data showed.

The government is selling up to 2 per cent stake or 26.13 crore shares in IRFC at a floor price of Rs 91/share. The OFS includes a greenshoe option of 1 per cent stake.

The government will decide on exercising the greenshoe option later on Wednesday.

Retail investors will get to bid in the share sale offer on Thursday.

The floor price of Rs 91/ share was set at a discount of 7.8 per cent over Tuesday's closing price of IRFC shares on the BSE.

Shares of IRFC were trading 5.47 per cent lower at Rs 93.29 on the BSE on Wednesday.

In the current fiscal year, the government has sold minority stakes in five central public sector enterprises and banks and insurance companies. —*PTI*

IPO-bound Tryfacta secures two major NASA contracts

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

US-based staffing and technology solutions provider Tryfacta secured two contracts under NASA's Solutions for Enterprise-Wide Procurement (SEWP) programme, providing access to federal IT business opportunities through 2036.

Each contract has a maximum value of USD 20 billion, enabling access for IT task orders in US government agencies.

Tryfacta had filed draft papers for a USD 100-150 million IPO on exchanges at Gujarat International Finance Tec-City. Upon listing, it is expected to be the first US-based firm to list in India through GIFT City.

According to the draft papers, the IPO comprises a fresh issue of up to 13.3 million equity shares and an offer-for-sale of up to 3 million shares —*PTI*

India's top 10 firms lost ₹11 lakh crore in 2025

MUMBAI, 24 JUNE

The combined value of India's top 10 most valuable non-state-run companies declined by Rs 11 lakh crore in 2025, according to the fifth edition of the '500 Most Valuable Non-State-Run Companies in India' report released by Axis Bank's Burgundy Private and Hurun India.

The report said the combined value of the top 10 companies stood at Rs 97 lakh crore, which declined to Rs 86 lakh crore.

Despite the decline, the report also added that the value of these companies remains significant, accounting for almost one-fourth of India's GDP and 27 per cent of the total value of the 2025 Burgundy Private Hurun India 500 list.

The report noted that Reliance Industries retained its position as India's most valuable company for the fifth consecutive year. It also emerged as the biggest value creator in absolute terms, adding more than Rs 1.8 lakh crore in value during the year.

Bajaj Finance was the highest value creator in percentage terms and was valued at Rs 5.8 lakh crore.

The report says India's corporate sector continues to demonstrate long-term growth despite short-term valuation pressures. The report highlighted that India Inc crossed USD 3.4 trillion in value, with the 500 companies collectively matching the scale of major global economies. —*ANI*

$11 BILLION SECTOR

Amazon, Flipkart to expand quick commerce units

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

Amazon Now, the e-commerce company's ultra-fast delivery service, has become the fastest-growing e-commerce business unit in Amazon India's history, with orders doubling every quarter since launch.

During a visit to an Amazon Now micro-fulfilment centre in Mumbai on Wednesday, CEO Andy Jassy announced an expansion to more than 300 cities, aiming to build what the company calls "India's largest" delivery-in-minutes network.

To support this growth, AI-driven digitisation, exports, and job creation, the e-commerce giant recently pledged an additional USD 35 billion investment by 2030, bringing its total India commitment to USD 75 billion.

The service is currently available to over 50 million customers across more than 15 metro and non-metro cities, including Bengaluru, Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, Pune, Hyderabad, Amritsar, and Kochi. Amazon plans to scale up its network of micro and urban fulfilment centres to house a wider selection of daily essentials — from groceries, personal care, and fashion and beauty products to small appliances and home and kitchen goods.

What began as a service focused largely on groceries and essentials has rapidly expanded to categories such as electronics, beauty products, home needs, and fashion accessories, with young consumers increasingly prioritising convenience and speed.

- Amazon Now, the e-commerce company's ultra-fast delivery service, has become the fastest-growing e-commerce business unit in Amazon India's history, with orders doubling every quarter since launch.

Amazon also announced 'Sammaan', a programme focused on the welfare of delivery associates powering its e-commerce and quick commerce business. A portion of the company's recently announced USD 300 million investment in operations and associate well-being will go towards strengthening and scaling the programme.

Similarly, Walmart-owned Flipkart announced Wednesday it is speeding up its quick commerce expansion in India, with a focus on smaller cities, as the global giant competes in the USD 11 billion domestic firm-led sector.

Major players, including Blinkit, Zepto, Swiggy Instamart, Flipkart, and Amazon, are investing aggressively to expand networks, strengthen supply chains, and broaden product assortment to grab a larger share of the market. —*Agencies*

RONALDO ROARS BACK WITH 2 GOALS AS PORTUGAL BEATS UZBEKISTAN

HOUSTON, 24 JUNE

Cristiano Ronaldo rebounded from a lacklustre start to his sixth World Cup and led Portugal to a dominant victory over Uzbekistan on Tuesday, renewing hope that the team is a contender for the title.

Ronaldo scored two goals to help Portugal roll to the 5-0 win and move on from its disappointing performance in the opening 1-1 draw with Congo.

"We improved," Ronaldo said in Portuguese. "It's life, sometimes you will have challenges and the main goal is always to improve and that's what we did."

The 41-year-old Ronaldo became the first player to score in six different World Cup tournaments with his goals, adding another impressive accomplishment to his storied career. He was named man of the match.

The victory gives Portugal four points in Group K Colombia, which has three points in the group, plays Congo on Tuesday night in Guadalajara.

Some critics questioned if Ronaldo should remain in the starting lineup after a forgettable performance in the match against Congo. But coach Roberto Martínez stuck with the superstar and his decision paid off almost immediately with Ronaldo putting the team up 1-0 in the sixth minute.

Martínez said the veterans on his team used their experience to calm the group and keep the negativity from impacting them on Tuesday.

"The discipline, the way we executed the game was fantastic," Martínez said. "And I think that shows you that the maturity in that dressing room allowed us to use the noise in a positive way. But easily in another dressing room it could have been fatal."

Ronaldo said it was a difficult week, one that was especially tough on him and his coach because most of the criticism went toward them.

"But it's always like that, it doesn't matter, because it's been 23 years on the job and when things go well, 'Cristiano is good', when things go bad, 'Cristiano is a retired player, is old'," he said. "It will always be like that. But we responded well today, me and my teammates, which is what we wanted." —*PTI*

Colombia beats Congo 1-0, enters knockout stage

GUADALAJARA, 24 JUNE

Daniel Muñoz helped Colombia break through Congo's stingy defense and advance to the knockout stage of the World Cup with a 1-0 win on Tuesday night.

Muñoz scored in the 76th minute after the Colombians had been held back by a strong performance from Congo goalkeeper Lionel Mpasi, who made five saves in the first 20 minutes.

Mpasi had no chance to stop Muñoz's left-footed strike after the ball deflected off a defender. It was Muñoz's second goal in the tournament, and the Crystal Palace fullback was named the man of the match. "We earned these three points as a team and for all the fans who came out to support us. This victory gives us a morale boost."

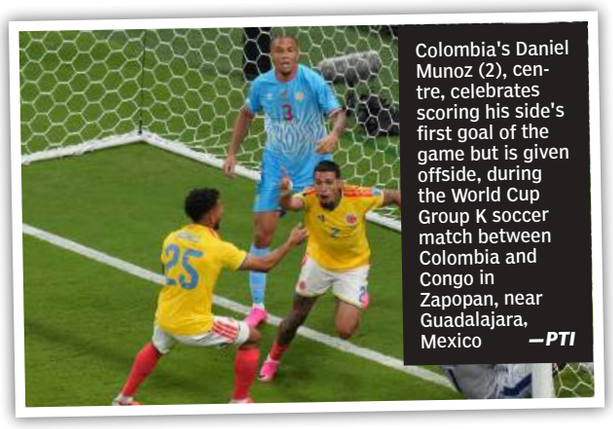
Congo twice came close to equalising in stoppage time, with Colombia goalkeeper Camilo Vargas making a superb save of a long-range strike by Nathanael Mbuku and then stopping a header by Chancel Mbemba off the ensuing corner kick.

"We probably could have scored more goals, but Congo made it difficult and it was tense there until the end," Colombia coach Néstor Lorenzo said.

Colombia star forward Luis Díaz had two goals called back in quick succession late in the second half, one for a foul in the 79th minute and another for offside in the 80th.

Congo had opened its first World Cup in 52 years with 1-1 draw against Cristiano Ronaldo and Portugal.

Colombia has six points from two matches in Group K, two ahead of Portugal and five clear of Congo. Portugal routed Uzbekistan 5-0 behind a pair of goals by Ronaldo earlier Tuesday in Houston. Colombia needs at least a draw against Portugal on Saturday to win the group. That result would also be enough to send Portugal to the knockout stage. —*PTI*



Colombia's Daniel Munoz (2), centre, celebrates scoring his side's first goal of the game but is given offside, during the World Cup Group K soccer match between Colombia and Congo in Zapopan, near Guadalajara, Mexico —*PTI*

Goallll! Messi mania overtakes Argentina

BUENOS AIRES, 24 JUNE:

A giant tribute to Messi A 26-meter-tall (85-foot) figure of Messi made of 70 tons of steel and iron towers over the outskirts of Cutral Co, a remote southern town in Patagonia. The player is kneeling, with the World Cup trophy he won in 2022 between his legs and one arm raised, as if greeting motorists traveling along Route 22.

Even the strong Patagonian wind cannot topple this tribute, inaugurated on 16 June during Argentina's World Cup debut, when the team once again dazzled under Messi, who sealed the victory over Algeria after scoring three goals.

Local authorities and the sculptor who designed it say it is the largest monument ever dedicated to the team captain, who turns 39 on Wednesday. "He is Argentina's natural ambassador. For me, it was very important, not only as an artist but as an Argentine," Aldo Beroisa, 61 said. —*PTI*

Argentina's passion for Lionel Messi has taken monumental form during the 2026 World Cup: A statue stands 26 metres tall in a remote town in Patagonia, and a mural signed by over 1,300 fans celebrates the captain who continues to inspire devotion across the country. —*PTI*

England, Ghana play to 0-0 draw at World Cup

England's Harry Kane (9) reacts after missing a shot on goal during the World Cup Group L soccer match between England and Ghana in Foxborough, Mass., near Boston —*PTI*

FOXBOROUGH, 24 JUNE

England and Ghana coach Carlos Queiroz have met before at the World Cup, with the result being quite a bit different. This time, Queiroz's team earned a point that could end up being enough for a spot in the round of 32.

England dominated possession but came up empty on several late scoring opportunities in a rain-filled 0-0 draw. "Our plan was to block and frustrate them from the first minute," Queiroz said. "We did it."

Four years ago at the World Cup in Qatar, Queiroz was coaching Iran when his team faced England and lost 6-2.

England, which has not lost to an African country at the World Cup in nine meetings, outshot Ghana 19-1 but failed capitalise on multiple chances. "Frustrated a little bit with how they defended, how they set up," England midfielder Jude Bellingham said. "They got exactly out of the game what they played for. Couldn't quite break them down, even with all corners, all the possession, all the shots on goal from distance." Both teams won their opening matches at this year's tournament, with Ghana beating Panama 1-0 and England defeating Croatia 4-2. Now both still have work to do in Group L before securing a spot in the knockout round at the first 48-team World Cup.

England ended up losing to France in the quarterfinals at the 2022 tournament. Ghana has not made it to the knockout round since reaching the quarterfinals at the 2010 World Cup in South Africa. —*PTI*

Congo's living statue debuts at the World Cup

Congo's famous living statue finally made his World Cup debut.

Michel Nkuka Mboladinga, who gained fame during the Africa Cup of Nations for posing as a statue of Congo's assassinated independence leader Patrice Lumumba for the entirety of games, attended Congo's match against Colombia after missing its opener against Portugal because of Ebola quarantine requirements.

Lumumba Vea, as the sharply dressed supporter is known for his resemblance to the slain leader, was at his seat about an hour before the game at Estadio Akron. He wore a bright red jacket and tie, yellow shirt and blue pants. When the game began, he stood still on a pedestal behind the Congo bench with his right arm raised. He nodded and smiled when asked if he was happy to be at the World Cup.

Croatia eliminates Panama with 1-0 win

TORONTO, 24 JUNE

Josip Stanišic lifted a curving cross onto the boot of Ante Budimir, who tapped it into an open net in the 54th minute Tuesday, giving Croatia a 1-0 win over Panama in the World Cup.

Croatia remains in contention for the knockout round ahead of its third and final group-stage match against Ghana on Saturday. Panama was eliminated and is still seeking its first World Cup point in two appearances.

After a slow-moving first half at BMO Field, Croatia broke through Panama's strong back line after the break, with substitute Budimir finding the net just four minutes after coming on.

The Vatreni nearly added another goal three minutes later when 40-year-old Luka Modric -- making his 200th international appearance -- passed ahead to Marco Pašalic on a breakaway, but Panama goalkeeper Orlando Mosquera blocked Pašalic's shot.

Panama had three straight chances in the 67th minute to knot things up. Croatia goalkeeper Dominik Livakovic made a trio of dazzling saves; on the third, he just managed to get a hand on the ball and send it over the net.

Group L will be decided on Saturday, with England and Ghana tied at four points and Croatia with three. England will face Los Canaleros in East Rutherford, New Jersey, while Ghana and Croatia will play in Philadelphia. —*PTI*

India beat Sri Lanka by 11 runs in U-19 Women's T20

CHENNAI, 24 JUNE:

Opener Tanishka Sharma's superb 50 was complemented by the bowling duo of Janhavi Veerkar and Maitri Maniar as India defeated Sri Lanka by 11 runs in their U-19 women's T20 game here on Wednesday. Opting to bat, India suffered setback losing Deeksha Katragadda (0) in the second over but Sharma made a composed 56-ball 58 laced with eight fours. She added 57 runs with Ira Jadhav (26 off 21) for the second wicket, while Kumari Palak (21 off 18) and Kashvi Kandikuppa (12) also chipped in with useful contributions as India posted 134 for six. Janhavi Veerkar (3/14) and Maitri Maniar (3/26) snared three wickets each as Sri Lanka could manage just 123 for 8 in 20 overs. The two teams will face off in the third and final T20 on Saturday. —PTI

US Open: Treesa-Gayatri advance, Rounak Chouhan enters main draw

FULLERTON, 24 JUNE:

Indian women's doubles pair of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand advanced to the second round of the US Open Super 300 badminton tournament after overcoming Spain's Paula Lopez and Lucia Rodriguez in a three-game battle here.

Making her return after an ankle injury layoff, Treesa, partnering Gayatri, defeated the Spanish combination 21-12 14-21 21-13 in a 51-minute opening-round contest.

The Indian duo will next take on Japan's Sumire Nakade and Miyu Takahashi.

In the men's singles qualifiers, Rounak Chouhan secured his place in the main draw with two victories. He first beat France's Enogat Roy 21-19 21-16 before rallying past Chinese Taipei's Kuo Kuan Lin 13-21 21-14 21-10.

Chouhan will now face fellow Indian S Sankar Muthusamy Subramanian in the opening round.

Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand in action at the US Open Super 300 badminton tournament —*ANI*

Treesa and Gayatri started strongly, racing to an 8-3 lead in the opening game. Although the Spaniards narrowed the gap with a four-point burst, the Indians regained control, moving to 17-11 before comfortably taking the game.

Paula and Lucia responded well in the second game, opening up an 11-7 advantage at the interval and maintaining their edge despite a late challenge from the Indians to force a decider.

The Indian pair regained the initiative in the third game, establishing an 11-6 lead at the mid-game break. They maintained the momentum thereafter and closed out the match without much trouble.

Fifth-seeded Kidambi Srikanth is set to face compatriot Saneeth Dayanand in the men's singles draw. —*PTI*

Iyer, Gill can help ease Suryansh into international cricket

NEW DELHI, 24 JUNE

It's a "lucky break" but Suryansh Shedge can turn his unexpected India call-up into a memorable learning experience by simply being observant inside an experienced dressing room with some help from young captains Shreyas Iyer and Shubman Gill, says his mentor and former national selector Jatin Paranjape.

Paranjape, former India player who has guided the Mumbai all-rounder over one-and-a-half years, said Iyer's T20 leadership could be particularly reassuring for the 23-year-old Shedge as the two have shared a successful association in Mumbai and Punjab Kings.

"Yeah, I think not only Shreyas but also (ODI captain) Shubman. Because both of them are young captains. And both of them are captains with a lot of empathy," Paranjape told PTI after Shedge's maiden India call-up for the white-ball tour of Ireland and England following the injury-forced withdrawal of Nitish Kumar Reddy.

"And they will understand the pressure Suryansh will be feeling, the nervousness that he will be feeling. Shreyas definitely, because they know each other, Suryansh has played under him. So, there will be a lot of comfort."

With both Hardik Pandya and Reddy out of UK tour, Paranjape feels even in ODIs, Gill can guide Shedge. —*PTI*